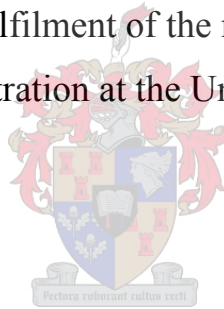


**THE ROLE OF PARTY POLITICS IN LOCAL PARTICIPATION AND
REPRESENTATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN MALAWI'S
LOCAL ASSEMBLIES**

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Public Administration at the University of Stellenbosch



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December 2005

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date: 12th July 2005

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ABSTRACT

Soon after independence in 1964 the Malawi government made an attempt to decentralise some of its activities through the creation of district development committees. However, in practice local-level institutions were not fully operational as the one-party system of government (led by the Malawi Congress Party) tended to manipulate the autonomy and operations of these institutions. Accordingly, there was no manifestation of local participation and representation.

The period of one-party rule in Malawi came to an end in 1994 with the introduction of multi-party democracy. The new government revitalised the idea of decentralised governance by passing the Local Government Act of 1998, which saw the establishment of local assemblies. Thus officially Malawi has a very supportive system in relation to citizen participation and representation through decentralised local institutions. However, in practice, there is no clear evidence that this is actually being realised. Consequently, this study was undertaken to examine the role of party politics on local participation and representation.

The study was conducted in three district local assemblies of Malawi, namely Zomba, Mulanje and Salima. This study is based mainly on a qualitative approach. There were 18 individual interviews with district officials (six in each district) and three focus group discussions (with specific groups set for this purpose), one in each district. All these were identified through purposive sampling techniques. The linkage between party politics and representation and participation was to a larger extent drawn from the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of local communities and individuals as expressed in focus group discussions and individual interviews. Overall, the study is highly dependent on a descriptive analysis of data.

The study findings show that Malawian local political representation has strong attributes of a mandate and trusteeship model of representation. Consequently, the constituents feel that they are not adequately represented in local assemblies. Party politics significantly affects the way politicians adopt these models of representation. Party politics also discourages people from setting up organisations or groupings that

can adequately mobilise people for specific community activities. In this regard, the findings further show that there are some shortcomings with respect to a focus on local issues and local people as well as in the flow of information on policy between local political parties and local constituents. Additionally, the study notes that there has been a regressive trend in the level of community participation over the past five years, which is mainly attributed to the effects of party politics. The people's perception, in relation to good governance, of local assemblies and their local political representatives is that they have not been able to meet people's expectations. On the whole, the study confirms findings from other studies which argue that, on its own, party politics is not a reliable vehicle for citizen participation and representation. Consequently, the study recommends, among other things, the adoption and implementation of an alternative new model that is meant to enhance effective local political participation and representation.

OPSOMMING

Kort na onafhanklikheid in 1964 het die Malawi regering 'n poging aangewend om sekere regeringsaktiwiteite te desentraliseer deur die skepping van distriksontwikkelingskomitees. In die praktyk het baie van hierdie plaaslike instellings egter nie gewerk nie omdat die eenpartystelsel van regering (gelei deur die Malawi Kongresparty) geneig was om die outonomie en werking van hierdie instellings te manipuleer. Gevolglik was daar geen manifestering van plaaslike deelname en verteenwoordiging nie.

Die era van eenpartyregering in Malawi het in 1994 tot 'n einde gekom met die instelling van veelpartydemokrasie. Die nuwe regering het die idee van gedesentraliseerde regering laat herlewe deur die aanvaarding van die Wet op Plaaslike Regering van 1998, wat die instelling van plaaslike wetgewers tot gevolg gehad het. Op hierdie wyse het Malawi 'n sterk amptelike ondersteuningstelsel geskep vir kiersersdeelname en verteenwoordiging. In die praktyk is daar egter geen duidelike bewyse dat dit werklik die geval is nie. Hierdie studie is onderneem om die rol van partypolitiek by plaaslike deelname en verteenwoordiging te ondersoek.

Die studie is gedoen in drie distrikswetgewers in Malawi, naamlik Zomba, Mulanje en Salima. Die studie volg 'n kwalitatiewe benadering. Daar was 18 individuele onderhoude gevoer met distriksbeamptes (ses per distrik) en drie fokusgroepgesprekke is gevoer (met spesifieke groepe wat vir hierdie doel saamgestel is), een per distrik. Al hierdie persone is geselekteer deur middel van geteikende steekproefmetodes. Die verband tussen partypolitiek, verteenwoordiging en deelname is grootliks afgelei uit die houdings, persepsies en ondervindings van plaaslike gemeenskappe en individue soos uitgedruk in die fokusgroepgesprekke en in individuele onderhoude. Die studie steun deurgaans sterk op 'n beskrywende analise van data.

Die bevindinge van die studie toon dat politieke verteenwoordiging in Malawi sterk eienskappe vertoon van die mandaat- en trusteeskapmodelle van verteenwoordiging. Partypolitiek beïnvloed egter op betekenisvolle wyses die wyse waarop politici hierdie

modelle vertolk. Kiesers voel dat hulle nie voldoende verteenwoordig is in plaaslike wetgewers nie. Partypolitiek ontmoedig ook mense om organisasies of groeperinge daar te stel om hulle voldoende te kan mobiliseer vir spesifieke gemeenskapsaktiwiteite. In hierdie opsig toon die bevindinge van die studie verskeie tekortkominge met betrekking tot 'n fokus op plaaslike vraagstukke sowel as in die vloei van inligting oor beleidsake tussen plaaslike politieke partye en kiesers. Aanvullend hiertoe toon die studie 'n agteruitgang in die vlak van gemeenskapsdeelname oor die laaste vyf jaar wat hoofsaaklik te wyte is aan die gevolge van partypolitiek. Die perspeksies van die gemeenskap oor goeie regeeruitkomste, is dat dit nie aan die mense se verwagtings voldoen het nie. Oor die algemeen bevestig hierdie studie die bevindinge van ander studies wat argumenteer dat partypolitiek op sy eie nie 'n betroubare voertuig vir kiesersdeelname en verteenwoordiging is nie. Gevolglik is die aanbeveling van die studie onder andere die aanvaarding van 'n alternatiewe, nuwe model wat gemik is op die bevordering van plaaslike deelname en verteenwoordiging.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the NUFU project through the Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi for making funds available for my studies at Stellenbosch University. Specifically, I want to thank Mr Nixon Khembo, the NUFU Project Coordinator at the Centre for Social Research, the Director of the Centre for Social Research, Dr Chilimampunga, and the entire staff of the NUFU project. I also want to thank my wife **Annie** and my son **Vitumbiko** for their prayers and support during my difficult moments. Their everyday support and prayers were extremely important. Last but not least, I want to thank my supervisor, Professor G.S. Cloete for his untiring effort, excellent lecturing skills and constructive criticism, which are unrivalled.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DDC –	District Development Committee
MCP –	Malawi Congress Party
DPP –	Democratic Peoples Party
UDF –	United Democratic Front
AFORD –	Alliance for Democracy
WVI –	World Vision International
MASAF –	Malawi Social Action Fund
MP –	Member of Parliament
NDA –	National Democratic Alliance
VCD –	Village Development Committee
DFID –	Department for International Development
OPC –	Office of the President and Cabinet
UNDP –	United Nations Development Programme
GoM –	Government of Malawi

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explain the particular focus of this study. Another aim of this chapter is to give a brief overview of the composition of local government and political parties in Malawi. In this regard, the chapter focuses on the background to the study, rationale, objectives and research hypothesis. The chapter concludes with an outline of thesis chapters.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1.1 The evolution of local government in Malawi

Soon after independence in 1964 the Malawi government made efforts to decentralise some of its undertakings through the creation of district development committees (DDCs). However, in practice local-level institutions were not fully operational as the one-party government (of the Malawi Congress Party) tended to manipulate the autonomy and operations of these institutions. In other words, local institutions had been officially established but real local participation in carrying out the mandate of these institutions was not manifest. During this period, 'the political environment was characterised by party supremacy, intimidation, centralisation and politicisation of the local structures' (Hussein 2003:274). In local authorities, 'all council chairmen were to be delegates to the Malawi Congress Party annual convention', and furthermore, 'all councillors were to be members of the party; those who ceased to be party members automatically lost their seats' (Kaunda 1992:56). The Local Government District Council Act No. 22:02 of 1965 took away most of the powers that remained of the local government so that 'by 1967, the central government had stripped district councils of their functions, reduced grants, withdrew some services like road maintenance and controlled staff appointments, promotion, discipline and dismissal' (Hussein 2003:274).

The period of one-party rule in Malawi came to an end in 1994 with the introduction of multi-party democracy. The new government (of the United Democratic Front) revitalised the idea of decentralised governance as indicated in the newly adopted Constitution of Malawi. The Constitution, 1995 (Act No. 7 of 1995) clearly stipulates the creation of decentralised local government authorities (GoM 1995a). The government also recognised the role that local authorities play in the development and consolidation of democracy. The Local Government Act of 1998 was passed, which saw the establishment of local assemblies (GoM 1998a). The Malawi decentralisation policy objectives are as follows (GoM 1998b):

- to create a democratic environment and institutions in Malawi for governance and development at the local level, which will facilitate the participation of the people at the grassroots level in decision making;
- to promote accountability and good governance at the local level in order to help the government reduce poverty;
- to establish strong local institutions that embrace participatory democracy;
- to strengthen and deepen democracy by bringing the services and decision making closer to the public, and to improve governance by achieving accountability and transparency

Local government in Malawi is composed of an administrative and a political wing, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi. For instance, section 147 (1 and 2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi states that local government authorities shall consist of:

1. Local government officers (the political wing) who shall be elected by free, secret and equal suffrage by the registered voters in the area over which that local government authority is to have jurisdiction;
2. Administrative personnel (the administrative wing), subordinate to local government officers (the political wing) to execute and administer the lawful resolutions and policies of those officers (GoM 1995a).

The first local assembly polls were conducted on 21st November 2000. Hussein (2003:275) mentions that ‘clearly, the responsibilities assigned to the district assembly, including the promotion of effective community participation in development, are enormous and challenging’.

1.1.2 Composition of local assemblies and the relationship with central government

There are different types of local assemblies in Malawi: the city, municipal, town and district assemblies. There are three city assemblies (Blantyre, Mzuzu and Lilongwe), one municipality (Zomba) and several district and town assemblies.

Local assemblies in Malawi are composed of:

1. One member elected from each ward within the local government area;
2. Traditional Authorities and Sub-Traditional Authorities from the local government area as non-voting members;
3. Members of Parliament from the constituencies that fall within the local government area as non-voting members;
4. Five persons as non-voting members to be appointed by the elected members to cater for the interests of such special interest groups as the Assembly may determine (GoM 1998a:5).

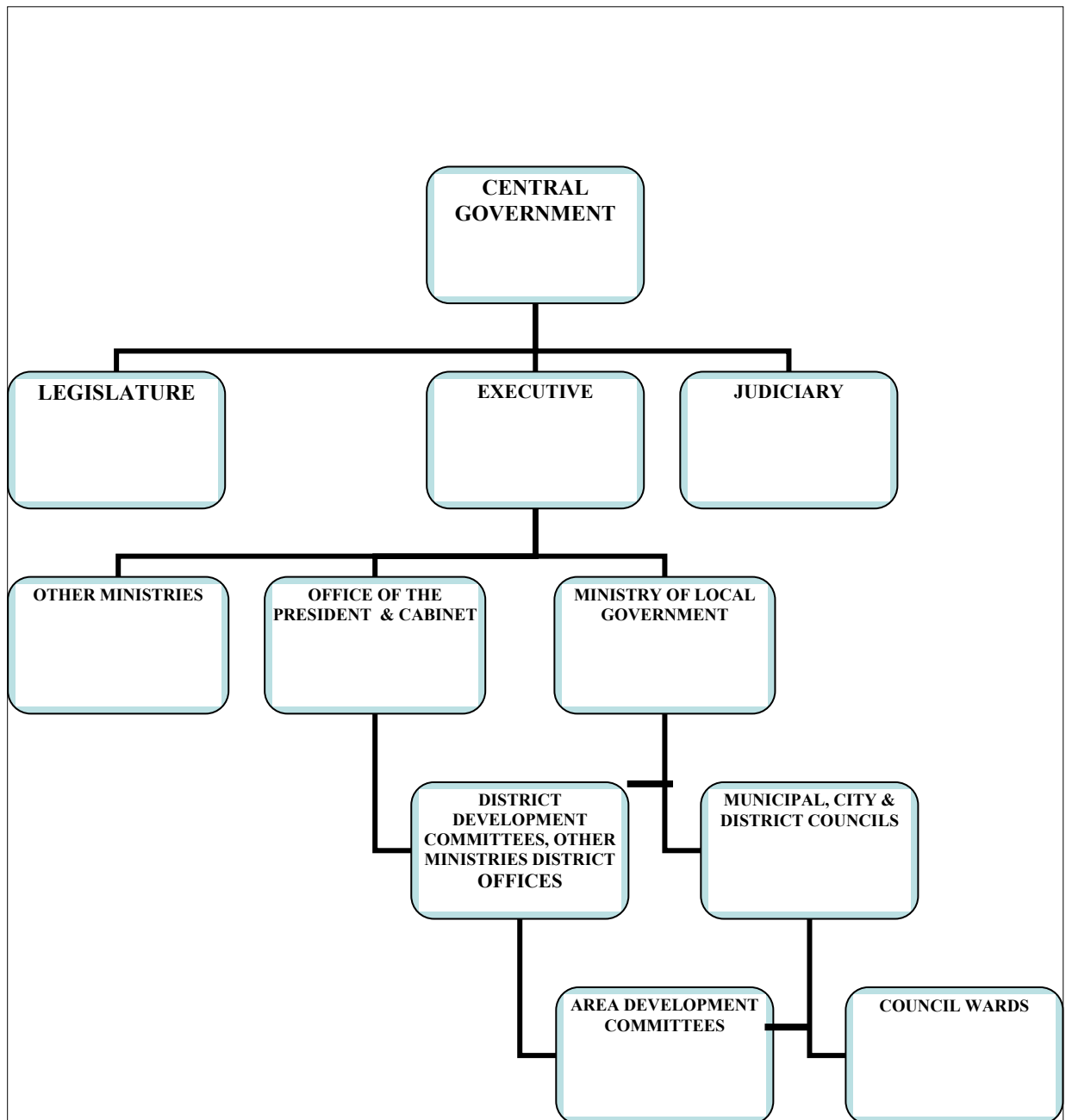
Each assembly is headed by a chairman, who serves a five-year term and is elected by members of the assembly on their first meeting. In the case of a city or municipal assembly, the chairman is known as the mayor. The secretariat of an assembly is headed by the Chief Executive Officer, who is known as District Commissioner in the case of district and municipal assemblies. Reporting to the Chief Executive/ District Commissioner are Directors of different departments such as Finance, Administration, and Planning and Development.

Each local authority area is divided into wards and represented by a democratically elected councillor, who remains in office for a four-year term. The responsibilities of a Malawian local government councillor are outlined as below (GoM 1995b: 18-17):

- a) Represent the community in his/her ward in council affairs;
- b) Explaining local authority policies to the community;
- c) Persuading the community on the need for them to pay for various services;
- d) Facilitating democratic decision-making and wide participation in the community;
- e) Ensuring that services and developments are distributed equally in the ward;
- f) Facilitating the provision of materials and staff by the council for projects. He or she should be fully involved in the project;
- g) Attending meetings of Village Action Groups and District Development Committees to contribute towards solving problems facing the people in their areas;
- h) Providing appropriate feedback to the community on services that cannot be provided;
- i) Appraising the council on the state of services to and the welfare of community.

Malawi's local assemblies are under the Ministry of Local Government (formerly Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development), which is also under the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC). The Ministry of Local Government offers primary guidance and support to local assemblies and also acts as a link between the central government and district assemblies. In order to enhance local assembly activities, local assemblies are mandated to form committees. The committees are comprised of assembly members and co-opted members. Committees that can be established at local level include the Finance, Development, Education, Works, Health and Environment Committees and the Appointments and Disciplinary Committees (GoM 1998a: Section 14). The figure below shows the relationship between the central and local government.

Fig 1: The relationship between central and local government in Malawi.



Source: GoM (1995b:2)

1.1.3 Brief overview of Political Parties in Malawi

As already mentioned, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was the only legally registered party in Malawi until 1993. Section 4 of the 1966 Malawi Republican Constitution barred the establishment of any other political party except the MCP. The first democratic multiparty elections were held in May 1994. Although there were 13 registered political parties at that time, only five political parties contested both the parliamentary and presidential elections ‘in their own right’ (Chinsinga 2003:4). Of these five parties, only three managed to secure parliamentary seats: the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD). In the presidential elections the United Democratic Front (UDF) leader, Bakili Muluzi, emerged winner by gaining 47.2 percent of the valid votes (Meinhardt & Patel 2003:30; Fozzard & Simwaka 2002:2). In the parliamentary election the UDF won 86 out of 177 seats (3 short of an overall majority), while the MCP won 56 and AFORD 35 seats (Meinhardt & Patel 2003:30). Bakili Muluzi was re-elected in the 1999 election, with the UDF gaining 97 seats in parliament.

The general observation is that political parties in Malawi do not have a particular ideological leaning and they tend to garner political support mainly by appealing to ethnic and religious lines (Phiri 2000; Meinhardt & Patel 2003). Almost all the post-1994 parliamentary election results followed a regional pattern with the UDF gaining more seats in the south, the MCP in the centre and the AFORD in the north. For the first time in a democratic era the local government elections were held in 2000 and the UDF also emerged as the winner by gaining 610 of the 860 wards (Fozzard & Simwaka 2002:2-3). The next local elections will be held at the end of this year (2005).

The former president Bakili Muluzi failed to secure a third-term constitutional amendment (the Malawi constitution allows two terms only), hence he hand-picked Dr Bingu wa Muntharika as the presidential UDF candidate – despite protest within the ruling party which led to the resignation (from the party) of some senior members such as the Vice-President, Justine Malewezi. The third democratic elections were held on 20th May 2004 and Dr Bingu wa Muntharika of the UDF emerged winner. In

parliamentary elections more seats were gained by MCP (59) followed by the 49 seats gained by the UDF, while independent candidates had 38 seats. Seven other smaller parties won the remaining seats. To a large extent the UDF had won more seats in the south, the MCP in the centre, while the north was shared amongst various political parties. The significant phenomenon of the 2004 elections is that for the first time there were more seats than expected that were won by independent candidates. In early February 2005 the president resigned from the ruling party and announced that he will be forming his own party called the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP). This was mainly due to internal UDF party squabbles, especially between the president and Bakili Muluzi, the former president, who retains the post of UDF party chairmanship. This resulted in political commentators noting that the UDF had technically become an opposition party. This study mainly focuses on the situation before the resignation of the president from the ruling party, hence the UDF is regarded as the ruling party. Chinsinga (2003:3) aptly summarises the condition of political parties in Malawi by arguing that:

political parties in Malawi have failed to function as essential building blocks of the evolving democratic culture especially with regard to the *intra party* politics of leadership. All the major parties are, at least in some way, beset by perennial leadership problems, destructive power struggles, unorthodox voting practices, and domination by a single leader. As a result, they have inevitably degenerated into instruments of political patronage.

1.2 RATIONALE

Local governance is looked upon as being critical to the enhancement of democracy and development in Malawi. In fact local authorities are expected to be closer to the people than the national parliament or central bureaucratic structures. Furthermore, party politics has taken central stage in directing local governance. Consequently, much is at stake in the success or failure of local governance and the political party system. The study will be vital in trying to help to pinpoint areas and issues that local authorities and parties need to improve in order to consolidate Malawi's democracy. Currently no studies have attempted to analyse the impact of party politics on local governance in Malawi. Consequently, the study will help fill this information gap and also help policy makers to find means of making local authorities become more meaningful and relevant in avoiding the mistakes made during the one-party state.

As discussed above, the former one-party autocratic system of government stifled participation and representation. The new democratic multiparty system of government aims at reversing the former scenario by establishing empowered decentralised local assemblies. On paper Malawi has a very supportive system in relation to citizen participation and representation. However, in practice there is no clear evidence that what is envisaged in local governance policy documents is implemented accordingly. In the case of Malawi, Hussein (2003:277) observes that, among other things, local governance is being confronted with ‘an emerging political culture of antagonism’ among political opponents. He further states that ‘development activities and projects tend to be highly politicised’ so that in some areas people are ‘unwilling to contribute to self-help projects initiated by a rival political party’. However, Hussein’s (2003) study did not necessarily focus exclusively on the impact of party politics. Although referring to water access and management in local assemblies, Ferguson and Mulwafu (2004) agree with Hussein’s observation. Ferguson and Mulwafu (2004:18) mention that debates in Malawian local assemblies do not ‘represent the concerns of diverse constituents.’ They argue that ‘instead, they frequently continue to represent interests within the dominant political party’ and this entails that there is ‘lack of broad-based dialogue and debate [which] allows older political practices to survive’ (Ferguson and Mulwafu 2004:18).

Apart from the above observations made by Hussein (2003) and Ferguson and Mulwafu (2004), there has been no study which has focused exclusively on the role of party politics in participation and representation in Malawi, especially in local assemblies. As indicated, this proposed study will therefore help fill the gap in the available literature. As will be discussed below, there is a general observation that in most countries (especially in developing countries), party politics can have a negative effect on citizen participation, representation as well as governance (Sono 1993; Putzel 2002:1; Caillaud and Tirole 2002:1454; Carbone 2003:4; Roberts 2004:326; Hollis 1994:12; Scarrow 1999:343).

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study can be categorised into general and specific, as outlined below:

1.3.1 General Objectives

The general objective of the study is to analyse and determine the role of party politics on citizen participation and representation in local assemblies of Malawi.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- give the background to local governance in Malawi;
- trace the dynamics of Malawi's local government politics and how these are influenced by the party system;
- assess people's general perception, in relation to good governance, of local assemblies and their local political representatives
- explore local citizen perception on the role as well as activities of political parties in relation to participation and representation.

1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The study intends to either verify or falsify the following hypothesis:

Party politics has negatively affected citizen participation and representation in Malawi's local assemblies.

1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study chapter outline is as indicated below:

Chapter One - Introduction

- Background to the study;
- Brief over view of political parties in Malawi;
- Objectives of the study;
- Research hypothesis.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

- Local governance and decentralisation;
- The link between citizen participation and governance;
- The notion of representation;
- The role of personality traits or leadership in representation and participation;
- Is party politics relevant for local participation and representation?
- Summary of governance outcomes emanating from participation and representation.

Chapter Three - Research Design and Methodology

- Conceptualisation and measurement
- Data collection methods and sample size
- Data analysis

Chapter Four - Analysis of Study Findings: The Impact of Party Politics on Local Participation and Representation

The study will present its field findings from individual interviews and focus group discussions and discuss such findings.

Chapter Five - Conclusion and Recommendations

The study findings will be summarised and recommendations made.

1.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter has explained the particular focus of this study. The chapter has also given a brief overview of the composition of local government and political parties in Malawi. Specifically, the chapter discussed the background to the study, rationale, objectives, and research hypothesis. Finally, the chapter concluded with an outline of thesis chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2 INTRODUCTION

The chapter gives the general direction of the study through a review of the relevant literature. Drawing on various studies, the chapter explores and explains in greater detail the concepts that are central to this study such as local governance, citizen participation, representation, and party politics as well as their linkage. The chapter also discusses the role of personality traits or leadership in representation and participation. More importantly, the chapter discusses to what extent party politics is a relevant vehicle for local citizen participation and representation. Finally, the chapter gives a summary of good governance outcomes emanating from participation and representation.

2.1 LOCAL GOVERNANCE, DECENTRALISATION AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL DECENTRALISATION

All over the world governments are decentralizing with the intention of empowering local authorities. Although decentralization as a concept has recently gained popularity, it is not a new thing; it is only that the recent attempts at decentralization have been deeper in scope and more elaborate in implementation than in the past. Although the terms ‘local governance’ and ‘local government’ are closely linked, they are not necessarily the same. However, in this study, just as in most local governance literature, these terms are interchangeably used. The United Nations Development Programme (2004:4) report gives a plausible definition of local governance by stating that it ‘comprises a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes, through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level’. The argument is that ‘local government is local and therefore best able to address the needs of local voters, who reside in a particular area and hold opinions about its governance’ (King 1989:190-191). Unlike central government, local government ‘is closer to the people,

has greater contact with them and can respond to changing needs' (King 1989:190-191).

There are numerous definitions of the term decentralisation, 'yet none seem to be able to get away from elaborating or adjusting the concept to fit the time and place of the description' (Katsiaouni 2003:8). It is even argued that some scholars seem 'to have abandoned the search for an all-encompassing definition...and have declared that decentralisation is not one thing; not even a series of degrees along a spectrum or scale' (Katsiaouni 2003:8). Probably one of the reasons for this problem is the interdisciplinary popularity of the term in scholarly discourse from environmental to management studies. According to Rondinelli and Nellis (1989:5), decentralisation is described as the transfer of responsibilities for planning, management, and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of the central government, semi-autonomous public authorities, regional authorities, or non-governmental, private or voluntary organisation. Crook (2002:2) cautions that 'decentralisation schemes cannot be treated as technically neutral devices which can be "implemented" without constraint, as if there were no pre-existing social context'. There are several social, political and economic factors that affect the implementation of decentralisation.

There are three broad types of decentralisation: political, administrative and fiscal, and four major forms of decentralisation: devolution, delegation, deconcentration and divestment (Stanley 2003: 6; Hollis and Plokker 1995:62; Work 2002:6).

Administrative decentralisation encompasses the transfer of decision-making authority, resources and responsibilities, for specific public services, from the central government to other levels of government (Stanley 2003: 6). In practice, administrative decentralisation goes hand in hand with civil service reform. The two forms of administrative decentralisation are deconcentration and delegation. Deconcentration is defined as 'a transfer of functions to lower levels within national government' (Hollis and Plokker 1995:62). On the other hand, delegation 'involves a transfer of functions on an agency basis to organisations outside national government, typically parastatal agencies or local authorities with some financial and administrative separation' (Hollis and Plokker 1995:62).

Fiscal decentralisation is regarded as the most comprehensive because it directly links to budgetary issues (Ribot 2002:40). Accordingly, fiscal decentralisation takes place when resources are reallocated to lower levels of government. Divestment takes place 'when planning and administrative responsibility or other public functions are transferred from government to voluntary, private or non-governmental institutions with clear benefits to and involvement of the public' (Work 2002:7).

In political decentralisation political power and authority are transferred to sub-national levels of government (Stanley 2003: 6). Examples of this type of decentralisation are elected and empowered sub-national forms of government especially at local level; essentially devolution is a form of political decentralisation. Devolution is defined as 'the establishment of decentralised representative regional, sub-regional or local political units acting within a pre-defined jurisdiction with relative autonomy' (Gildenhuys and Knipe 2000:238). Taking into consideration that political decentralization aims at giving citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision-making, it is mainly associated with pluralistic politics and representative government (King 1989:189-190). Essentially, it has the potential to support democratisation by giving citizens, or their representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies. Unlike administrative decentralisation, which focuses mainly on efficiency and improvement in service delivery, political decentralization is primarily concerned with political empowerment of local grassroots assemblies.

However, a clear 'understanding of decentralization requires explaining why it occurs, why it takes the particular forms it does, and the relation between those forms and the outcomes they produce' (Ribot 2002:7). Conyers (in Ribot 2002:8) gives four 'broad categories' of decentralization objectives: local empowerment (or local participation), administrative efficiency and effectiveness, national cohesion, and central control. The local governance objectives are pursued within a framework of specific values. Basically, it is these values and objectives which determine the nature of decentralisation that governments formulate or adopt. From a political perspective, King (1989:189) states that the 'core liberal values' of local governance are liberty, participation and efficiency. In terms of liberty, he argues that there shouldn't be centralisation of power so that 'polity is pluralistic', hence its local citizenry should

have power to decide what it needs. The second liberal political value for local government is allocative efficiency. In this case, local government ‘can allocate public goods and services in the most economically efficient way’ (King 1989:191). Participation is critical in current decentralisation processes and will be examined more closely below. Related to Conyers’s objectives of decentralisation (in Ribot 2002) and King’s (1989) ‘core liberal values’, Stanley (2003:7-8) outlines what she calls ‘pillars of decentralisation’ (thus local governance). These pillars of decentralisation are participation, ownership, accountability and transparency. According to Stanley (2003:8), ownership refers to ‘ensuring that programmes and projects are nationally owned, executed and implemented’. On the other hand, accountability and transparency entail ‘ensuring that monitoring and evaluation systems are in place to support the local communities to fully understand their own roles and responsibilities’ and at the same time ‘supporting government responsibility through inclusion of Monitoring and Evaluations Systems, audits, technical output and impact evaluations.’ From the above analysis of ‘broad categories’ (Ribot 2002), ‘core liberal values’ (King 1989) and ‘pillars’ (Stanley 2003) of decentralisation or local governance, it is evident that the notion of participation features in all of them, hence it is of great significance in this study. To a large extent, the notion of participation emerges when political decentralisation is being advocated. It is acknowledged in political circles that ‘participation is at the core of Western ideas about political democracy’ (King 1989:190).

2.2 THE LINK BETWEEN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY/GOVERNANCE

Ribot (2002:12) states that it is precisely ‘participation [which] is currently a key aspect of most discussions of decentralization and is often uttered in the same sentence’; and ‘decentralization is argued for on the grounds that public participation and citizen involvement in programs is good in and of itself’. The UNDP (2004:4) argues that the essential ‘building blocks’ of any good local governance must comprise of: *citizen participation*, partnerships among key actors at the local level, capacity of local actors across all sectors, multiple flows of information, institutions of accountability, and a pro-poor orientation. Theron (2005: 117) aptly refers to public (or citizen) participation as the first ‘building block’ of development. In general, the

word 'governance' itself (without the word 'local'), 'stresses the interdependence between governmental and societal actors as one of the crucial variables influencing the performance of public actors' (Daemen 2000:54). Internationally, governments give pre-eminence to participation because it 'is believed to make plans more relevant, give people more self-esteem, and to help legitimize the planning process and the state as a whole' (Ribot 2002:12). For the most part, the notion of participation is directly linked to democracy. Taking into account that '*the foundations of democratic society* are built on the concept of citizenship' (Perry and Katula 2001:330), this entails that 'citizenship participation is the cornerstone of democracy' (Roberts 2004:315). Dalton (2000:912) aptly argues that 'the wellspring of politics flows from the attitudes and behaviours of the ordinary citizen and that the institutions of government and the political process are structured in response to the citizenry'. A renowned political scientist, de Tocqueville (in Lowndes and Sullivan 2004: 57), commented that 'enhanced public participation at the local level is central not just to the future health of local democracy, but to the building of responsive and accountable governance across the board.' It is worthy noting, however, that citizen participation is pursued not only as a 'moral obligation' but because of 'practical considerations' as well (Daemen 2000:54).

However, local political participation is not a spontaneous social phenomenon which operates in isolation. Local political participation is 'mediated by communication' and, more importantly, it is through this communication that 'citizens acquire information about issues and problems in the community and learn of opportunities and ways to participate' (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy 1999:316). In other words, the issue of political parties and politicians is crucial in citizen participation, because what one observes in local governance is that 'policy makers and politicians are integrating programmes to address citizen participation' (Work 2002:4). In effect 'true participation is about power, and the exercise of power is politics', it follows therefore that 'participation inevitably becomes simply a manifestation of a broader political process' (Dudley 1993:160). The idea that participation leads to community empowerment (and that it should be initiated as well as led by the communities themselves) is forcefully argued by Burkey (1993), Chambers (1997) and Theron (2005).

The question that arises is: how do local citizens participate in order to promote local governance? In order to answer this question, it is essential first of all to outline specific objectives of citizen participation; they are:

- provide information to citizens;
- get information from and about citizens;
- improve public decisions, programmes, projects, and services;
- enhance acceptance of public decisions, programmes, projects, and services;
- supplement public agency work;
- alter political power patterns and resource allocations;
- protect individual and minority group rights and interests; and
- delay or avoid complicating difficult public decisions (Brynard, 1996b:44-45).

In order to understand how the above-mentioned objectives are effectively pursued in local governance, two other important issues relating to participation need to be highlighted: the forms and the process of participation. Chinsinga (2003:139) observes that participation can take two forms: transformational or instrumental.

Instrumental participation aims only at achieving a particular objective and often the citizenry are not involved in decision making other than being recipients of already made decisions. On the other hand, transformational participation is embraced and pursued in such away that it becomes ‘an inherent part of community life’ Chinsinga (2003:139). Transformational participation has the connotation of citizen empowerment and development. In terms of process, participation ‘appears to be an even broader concept than decision-making’, because in most cases ‘it starts well before the decision in question is made and extends well beyond it’ (Brynard 1996b:41).

Fundamentally, ‘acts of participation should also not be viewed in isolation, but rather seen within a stream of interconnected acts’ (Brynard 1996b:41). Furthermore, ‘local political participation has to be considered as a dynamic process rather than a static system outcome’ (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy 1999:316). The core issue is that participation ‘is not an end in itself; the aim is to create a “virtuous circle” whereby participation in specific local initiatives leads in turn to increased levels of public

interest in, and involvement with, local affairs' (Lowndes and Sullivan 2004: 57). Meyer and Cloete (in Theron 2005:124) explain that 'authentic public participation' normally goes through four stages, namely: (1) through the involvement of legitimate democratically elected political representatives; (2) through the involvement of leaders of legitimate organisations which represent community interests; (3) through the involvement of individual opinion leaders in the community; and (4) through the direct involvement of ordinary community members at grassroots level in massive activities. However, Theron (2005:125) raises an interesting issue when he asks:

The question that begs to be answered is "who are the authentic representatives of the community?" Is there a universally accepted measure of who the real representatives of the community are? Analysis of grassroots participation often rests on the naïve view of the community as being harmonious, and thus as having unitary priorities.

In general, it is argued that mechanisms that ensure citizen participation include: forums, community organizations, business, voluntary organizations and joint planning efforts (Hilliard and Kemp 1999:355). In practice, however, this type of participation is not feasible when the population and geographical area of a local assembly are huge. Accordingly, this leads to the question of representation raised by Theron (2005:125) above. In direct representation, the most common and feasible form of local participation is voting. Specifically, 'one can, therefore, distinguish between direct participatory democracy where citizens are directly involved and a more indirect representative democracy where duly elected representatives act on behalf of the electorate' (Hilliard and Kemp 1999:354). It is not surprising therefore that one of the advantages of devolution is that it 'creates a better opportunity for direct voter participation in the policy-making and decision-making processes, through representation' (Gildenhuys and Knipe 2000:239). The issue of local 'direct voter participation' inevitably calls for an analysis of the role and relevance of local political party machinery. The idea of representation is specifically dealt with in greater detail below under 'The notion of representation.'

2.2.1 Relationship between partnership and participation

Lowndes and Sullivan (2004: 51) make an interesting point by mentioning that ‘there is no real reason why partnerships and participation should go together’. They further argue that ‘partnership working does not in itself deliver enhanced public participation; indeed, there are reasons why it may be particularly difficult to secure citizen involvement in a partnership context.’ Despite this argument, Lowndes and Sullivan (2004: 51) acknowledge the fact that ‘partnership and participation have co-evolved’, especially in the context of British local government. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002: 1) explain that no matter how it is set up, ‘a partnership is about sharing responsibility and overcoming the inflexibility created by organisational, sectoral and even national boundaries’. To this effect, a partnership is regarded as a way of bringing people together so that they can share ideas, discuss, plan and get involved in other related issues.

The relationship (link) between partnership and participation is explained by Lowndes and Sullivan (2004: 57-58) as follows:

- (1) ‘partnership can be a *means* of consulting or involving the public’. In this case partnerships are set up so that the local government may have an opportunity to receive feedback on its policy or programmes;
- (2) ‘participation can be regarded as an *ingredient* of partnership working.’ In other words, ‘full involvement of all interested parties in decision making (or at least debate) on local issues or services’ enhances and consolidates partnership. In such a scenario, ‘better decisions will be made, leading to the better use of local resources, the smoother implementation of policies or service developments, and a greater sense of shared ownership’ that ultimately benefits everyone;
- (3) ‘enhanced public participation can be seen as a potential *outcome* of partnership working’. In most urban partnership programmes, public participation is taken as one of the important indicators in order to evaluate the impact of such programmes.

2.3 THE NOTION OF REPRESENTATION

Heywood (2002: 224) argues that ‘as a political principle, representation is a relationship through which an individual or group stands for, or acts on behalf of, a larger people.’ Although some problems surrounding the issue of representation have been resolved in modern democracies through the principle of universal suffrage, Heywood (2002:224) points out that ‘this approach to representation is simplistic.’ He goes on to explain that by equating representation with elections and voting, ‘this ignores more difficult questions about *how* one person can be said to represent another, and *what* it is that he or she represents’.

Goodwin (1987:198-200) outlines three notions (theories) of representation. The first notion is that a ‘representative can be viewed as a delegate, who reiterates the views of constituents and expresses no independent opinion.’ The second notion is taken from ‘microcosmic’ theory and ‘each representative is taken to be typical of a class of persons, whose interests he/she will automatically promote.’ For example, if the representative is a farmer, he or she will represent or promote issues relating to his or her profession. This theory essentially calls for a wide and diverse cluster of individuals in decision-making bodies in order to reflect the views of the wider community. The third theory ‘is that representatives should be accountable but independent, acting on behalf of their electors but using their own judgement.’ According to this theory, electors entrust the representative to use his superior judgement in order to promote interests of ‘common good.’ However, it is only through ‘maximum accountability of the representatives to the electorate’ that can help ‘avoid such representation leading to a government divorced from the people’.

The first, second and third notions discussed above are what Heywood (2002) calls the delegation, resemblance and trusteeship model of representation. Another theory of representation is what is known as the mandate model, which is linked to party politics (Heywood 2002: 227). Taking into consideration that in contemporary politics ‘individual candidates are rarely elected on the basis of their personal qualities and talents’, but more often than not ‘they are seen as foot soldiers for a party’ (Heywood 2002: 227), the mandate model seems to reflect actual practice. The critical point is that when a party wins elections, it feels compelled to fulfil the promises it made

during the campaign period. Consequently, ‘politicians serve their constituents not by thinking for themselves or acting as a channel to convey their views, but remaining loyal to their party and its policies’ (Heywood 2002: 227). These theories of representation are summarised in the table below, which further indicates the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Table 1: Summary of representation models (theories)

Model of representation	Description	Advantage	Disadvantage
1- delegation	A representative acts on the exact views of his/her constituents with little or no personal judgement or preferences.	(i) offers broader opportunities for popular participation; (ii) Checks the self-serving inclinations of professional politicians.	(i) tends to breed narrowness and foster conflict; (ii) limits the scope for leadership and statesmanship amongst representatives.
2- resemblance	Each representative is taken to be typical of a class of persons, whose interests he/she will automatically promote.	(i) representatives share the experience and identity of the group they represent.	(i) representation is viewed in narrow or exclusive terms, thus no common good or interest being advanced; (ii) justifies government’s weakness to build an inclusive society; (iii) difficult to implement without removal of some democratic ideals.
3- trusteeship	Representatives are to serve their constituents by exercising their own judgements, taking into consideration that most voters don’t know their own best interests (especially the uneducated).	(i) time saving exercise by giving little room for debate; (ii) helps voters who are unable to accurately follow complex policy issues.	(i) propagates undemocratic notions; (ii) wrongly links education with representation; (iii) representatives are likely to pursue their own selfish interests.
4- mandate	Representation built on the idea of carrying out promises made during elections.	(i) it takes into account the influence of political parties; (ii) helps explain some election results; (iii)- bind politicians to their promises.	(i) it wrongly assumes that voters are always rational and well informed; (ii) voters are not necessarily attracted to <i>all</i> the promises made by politicians; (iii) applicable only in certain electoral system (majoritarian).

Personal compilation based on data from Heywood (2002) and Goodwin (1987).

The question of which form of representation should be advocated at a local level is not simple to answer. Taking into consideration that decentralisation is intended ‘to enhance the opportunities for participation by placing more power and resources at a

closer, more familiar, and more easily influenced level of government' (Stanley 2003: 6), the notion (or combination of notions) of representation that has the potential to fulfil this objective should be advocated. On the whole, the notion (or combination of notions) that adequately reflects the views, aspirations and desires of the people ideally promotes the values ascribed to local governance. The problem is that in practice, more often than not, the issue of representation is highly debatable and ambiguous, because it is fraught with conceptual and empirical inconsistencies. Consequently, 'the question of representativeness will remain a relevant one until comprehensive research provides clear answers' (Clapper 1996b:72). Despite their shortcomings, the resemblance and delegation models are generally viewed as more relevant and appropriate. However, as explained below, these models are not sufficient in themselves, they need to be complemented by other mechanisms of citizen participation.

Contrary to popular opinion, the critical fact is that voting is not sufficient for effective citizen participation. More precisely, voting can be regarded as 'the abstract and distant nature of representative democracy' whereby a 'citizen gives a very general signal: he/she supports a person, party or programme' (Daemen 2000:55). For that reason, 'this kind of signal offers little chance for stressing specific issues and interests, or adding personal nuances' and it is the utilisation of other methods of political participation that 'opens new channels for political communication, thus creating opportunities for a more precise reflection of the citizens political preferences' (Daemen 2000:55). It can aptly be argued that 'representative democracy needs to be complemented by mechanisms of citizen participation, to enable those elected to gauge better what are the needs and priorities of citizens' and in this way 'create a sense of ownership on the part of citizens of the services provided by government' (DFID 2002:4). In other words, local politics needs effective civil society (Faguet 2003). Taking into consideration that in Africa 'over 70-80% of populations live in rural areas where illiteracy is rampant', the formation of vibrant civil society institutions 'is a fairytale or a romantic search for a self-image in another world' (Hameso 2002:6).

Nevertheless, party politics has become critical internationally in the facilitation and advancement of local government participation through representative democracy (Clapper 1996a:66). Local politicians and their political parties usually utilise or *claim*

to have utilised one or a combination of the above notions of representation whenever it fits their purposes. The important fact is that ‘local government forms the front line of democratic representation and “unrepresentativeness” at this level of government is likely to impact on the legislature’ (Meadowcroft 2001b:34). Sullivan (2001:8) makes an important observation by stating that ‘it is now taken for granted that representative democracy without participative democracy is insufficient.’ Nevertheless, she adds that it is not explained ‘how the two combine and what the balance is between them’. It is, however, beyond scope of this paper to make such an attempt. Not undermining the significance of the point raised by Sullivan (2001), what is clear is that the problem of trying to combine these two concepts is of more academic relevance than practical.

2.4 THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS OR LEADERSHIP IN REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Taking into consideration that politics is an activity involving human behaviour in a social context, the influence of personality or leadership traits in influencing, either positively or negatively, the level of political representation and participation cannot be ruled out. Specifically, the role of personality in influencing (either positively or negatively) the nature of representation and participation has been an issue of discussion for some time (Milbrath and Goel 1977). Personality and leadership are highly linked and both have great significance in political behaviour such as participation and representation. Personality has been understood as ‘how people affect others and understand themselves’ (Shriberg, Shriberg, and Lloyd 2002: 16). Leadership is defined as ‘the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people’ (Dubrin 2004: 3). Leadership traits are critical in politics because ‘leaders have to find ways of building political parties, finding resources, mobilizing support and winning elections’ (Panday 2004: 46). The linkage between political leadership and participation and representation is aptly captured in the England’s ‘local government white paper’ (in Ashworth; Copus & Coulson 2004:459)

modern councils fit for the 21st century ...have clear and effective *political leadership*, to catch and retain local people’s interest and ensure local accountability. *Public participation* in debate and decision making is valued, with strategies in place to inform and engage local

opinion . . . more frequent local elections will strengthen direct accountability to local people by ensuring that voters in every area have greater opportunity to pass judgement on their *local representatives* (emphasis added).

Leadership is also associated with personal charisma or magnetism that is the ‘captivating, inspiring, personality with charm and charismatic-like qualities’ (Dubrin 2004: 3). Politicians sometimes appeal to their personal charisma or magnetism in order to draw people to themselves and hence influence them in the process. Five critical leadership personality traits, which are also relevant in the political arena, have been identified by Luthans (cited in Shriberg *et al.* 2002:16) as encompassing the following:

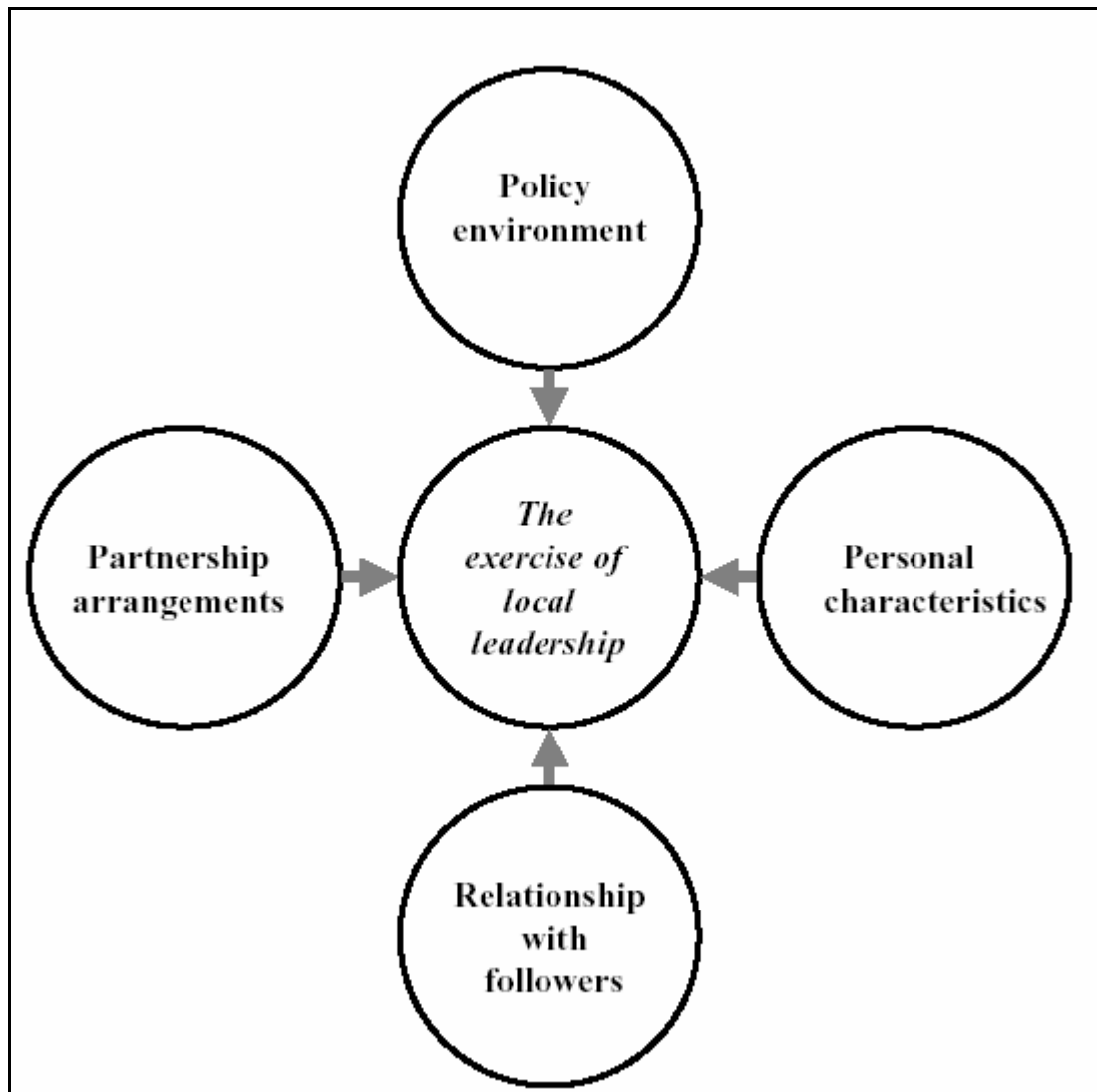
- 1 Extroversion - being sociable, talkative and assertive;
- 2 Agreeableness - being good-natured, cooperative, and trusting;
- 3 Conscientiousness - responsible, dependable, persistent and achievement oriented;
- 4 Emotional stability - level of not being tense, insecure, or nervous;
- 5 Openness to experience - imaginative, artistically sensitive and intellectual.

In their paper entitled *Leadership in Urban Governance*, Hambleton, Stewart, Sweeting, Huxham, and Vangen (2001: 9-10) identify four elements that influence local leadership. These influences can be summarised as:

1. The *policy environment* (national and local) - The ‘rules’ established externally (often by central government but also by economic forces) determine the scope for the exercise of local leadership;
2. *Partnership arrangements* - The media of structures and process;
3. *Personal characteristics* - The attributes or traits of people shape the specific roles chosen by leaders to take matters forward – the charisma of Weberian leadership or the more mundane aspects of local champion, the assertive behaviour of the city boss or the consensual style of the facilitator;
4. *Relationship with followers* - seen by some as a transactional role, but more obviously capturing the extent to which leadership is representational and dependent on the retention of loyalty of followers for continuing hold of the leadership position.

The link between all these factors of influence has been well analysed in the figure below. According to these elements, at a local level leadership is more dependent on personal characteristics and the relationship with followers.

Figure 2: Four elements that influence local leadership.



Source: Hambleton (2001:10)

The influence of a party leader (councillor) at the local level depends more especially on the ‘type of the leader’ (Cole 2002: 27). Corina (cited in Cole 2002: 27-28) devised five categories of ‘councillor models’ that was based on observations of councillors in Britain. These are party politicians, ideologists, partyists, associates and politico-administrators, as summarised in the table below:

Table 2: A summary of ‘Councillor model’ indicating different possible councillor’s personal and leadership outcomes.

Councillor attribute	Possible personal and leadership outcome
1 Party Politicians	Tries to assess policies and decisions against a fairly coherent set of social values which they had resolved into political principles.
2 Ideologists	Tend to express strong opinions that could be pursued to the point of open and uncompromising opposition.
3 Partyists	Place most emphasis on allegiance to their party and are often responsible for overt party division within the committees and full council.
4 Associates	Are members who, whilst belonging to a political party, do not fully identify themselves with the party.
5 Politico-Administrators	Are at the centre of party and council business; they tend to be the most powerful members and often hold cross-party views.

Personal compilation with data from Corina (cited in Cole 2002:27-28).

According to Cole (2002), the attributes of ‘party politician’ and ‘politico-administrator’ types of leadership make them the ones who can be more effective at a local level. The reason is that these attributes have a greater chance of accommodating the views from below and, at the same time, there is a guarantee of success for policies proposed by individuals who possess these attributes.

However, despite wide acknowledgement of the link between personality and political outcomes or activities, Milbrath and Goel (1977: 74) caution that ‘it is not easy to establish clear and reliable connections between personality and political behaviour’. They mention two reasons why it is difficult to establish this linkage. The first problem is that ‘it is difficult to measure personality: it is not accessible to direct measurement, it can only be inferred from behaviour.’ Furthermore, the problem with

inferences is their lack of tracing causality, because ‘seemingly identical acts by different individuals may spring from different personality needs’ or vice versa. The second problem is that ‘the impact of personality on behaviour is mediated through beliefs and attitudes’, which further complicates analysis. Milbrath and Goel (1977: 75-76) conclude by arguing that ‘personality is a complicated, interrelated, and interacting system...an examination of research studies indicates that the study of personality in relation to political behaviour has not been a fertile undertaking’. Most local governments use the partnership approach in order to formulate and implement their programmes. In such a scenario, ‘it can be particularly hard for citizens to identify where power lies within a partnership (leadership is often unclear)’ (Lowndes and Sullivan 2004: 65). It is not surprising, therefore, that ideas relating to political leadership are often contestable.

Notwithstanding the above caution expressed by Milbrath and Goel (1977), Heywood (2002: 349) argues that the subject of ‘political leadership’ (thus personality as well) is growing because, among other things, ‘as society becomes more complex and fragmented, people may increasingly look to the personal vision of individual leaders to give coherence and meaning.’ At a local level, where the contact between elected officials and the electorate is envisaged to be close, the role of personality, especially through the party political machinery, is bound to be considerable. As John (2003:5) argues, at local level ‘parties, interest groups and political cultures have provided support for particular styles of leadership.’ In a study of an English town, Dearlove (in Cole 2002: 24) observed that ‘party group leaderships expected councillors to “limit their contact with pressure groups”’.

2.5 IS PARTY POLITICS THE RELEVANT VEHICLE FOR LOCAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION?

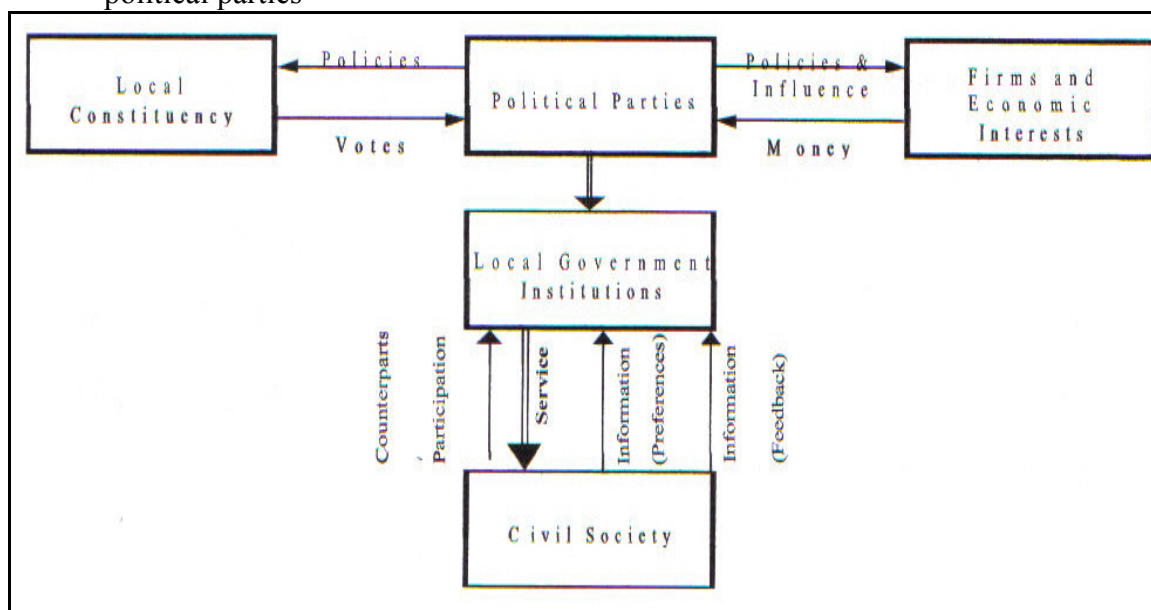
In view of the fact that ‘local government is local democracy’, it follows that ‘a system of local government should be regarded as an effective means of encouraging popular participation’ (Brynard, 1996a:138). The role of party politics can therefore not be underestimated. Internationally, increased decentralisation has shown that this

encourages national political parties to place greater interest in local party politics. Although based on British politics, the observation by Coulson (2004: 475) is internationally relevant when he mentions that ‘the [national] political parties have increasingly seen local elections as a springboard to national power, and sought to control the recruitment, and subsequent behaviour, of councillors.’

There are several advantages of the national party politics machinery which also flow to the local government. Some selected advantages of party politics, especially in developing countries, are outlined below.

First, party politics helps to formulate, contextualise, prioritise and aggregate issues that affect individuals or communities for effective presentation (Sono 1993:96; Scarrow 1999:342). Taking into consideration that in most developing countries the majority are illiterate or not adequately educated, political parties mobilise the tangible and intangible resources on behalf of their members in order to exert positive influence in the decision-making process. Faguet (2003) mentions that for local governance to be effective, there is a need for local politics in which competition spurs political entrepreneurship and policy innovation as parties vie to win new voters. He further indicates that three related conditions are required for this to happen: (1) an open and transparent electoral system; (2) a competitive party regime; (3) a substantive focus on local issues and local people (Faguet 2003). This description is illustrated in Figure 3 below:

Fig 3: A conceptual model for local government depicting the role of local political parties



Source: Faguet (2003)

Second, it is argued that ‘political party affiliation and intense support for a party, a party candidate or issue are inclined to yield a high interest in politics and participation behaviour’ (Clapper 1996a:62). As further argued by Scarrow (1999:342), ‘parties also stimulate wider civic involvement, attempting to mobilize citizens and increase their interest in political affairs’.

Third, the internal party competition for candidacy entails a ‘wider participation’, which has the potential to produce a ‘higher quality of leadership’ (Hameso 2002:8).

Despite these advantages of political parties with respect to participation and representation, it has been counter-argued that political parties have had a negative effect on citizenry participation and representation – more especially at local level. As explained below, local political parties can be caught up in a complex net of national party politics hence act as a regressive element of decentralization and genuine participation at local level. The analysis below gives the general problems of political party system, whether at national or local level. The assumption is that usually the national party political issues flow down to local-level politics as well.

Hollis (1994:12) points out the problem of what he calls ‘nationalisation of local politics’ created by political parties. He argues that ‘the politicisation of local

authorities somehow usurps their true role as representatives of community identity.’ He further explains this by adding that ‘the influence of party politics tends to lead to greater uniformity in policy and practice, and may obscure local needs and inhibit local independence’.

Another problem is the indirect exclusion of citizenry in participation. When a party advocates for a particular policy, it implies that those who oppose it are excluded. Roberts (2004:326) aptly asks ‘will there be room in the participatory process for ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, women, the old, gays and lesbians, youth, the unemployed, the underclass, and recent immigrants? And who will speak for future generations?’ Although ‘there is a persistent belief that local democracy is necessary for national unity’ (Hope 2000:522), political parties tend to achieve the opposite. It is not surprising to note that in African countries, national political parties tend to draw support along ethnic, religious and regional lines. Carbone (2003:4) explains that ‘African parties commonly emerge as clientelistic arrangements based on personal and communal loyalties.’ More importantly, African political parties ‘normally lack significant socio-economic, ideological or programmatic foundations as well as links with genuinely pluralist organised interests’ (Carbone 2003:4). Due to the ‘nationalisation of local politics’ as argued by Hollis (1994), local political parties tend to follow suit and hence curb rather than promote integration. This divisive role of political parties has the potential to negatively affect participation and development.

There are problems associated with the proper identification of local needs and priorities through the party political machinery. The reason is that emphasis is placed on election of representatives and ‘local needs, priorities and choices are not identified through the electoral process in sufficient detail for the purposes of planning and budgeting’ (DFID 2002:2). This entails that ‘party members choose an ideology which will win votes, not one they believe in, since their objective is the acquisition of office, not the creation of a better society’ (Downs 1957:113). More specifically, political parties are criticized for ‘playing a more subtle game, appearing to offer members opportunities for meaningful participation, when in fact party leaders manipulate intra-party democracy for their own ends’ (Scarrow 1999:343). A more severe criticism is expressed by Caillaud and Tirole (2002:1454), who point out

that ‘the fact that politicians make up the voters’ informational deficit by designing platforms and recommending voting behaviours does not per se provide a rationale for the existence of parties’. No wonder ‘others have sought to expose party-mediated participation as a worthless façade’ (Scarrow 1999:342).

Political parties are also accused of marginalising the poor. Campaigning is costly and hence the poor are unlikely to be given an opportunity to become political party candidates. Meadowcroft (2001b: 19) observes that political party ‘representatives are disproportionately drawn from certain sections of the population.’ He adds that ‘those who attain elected office tend to be disproportionately male, middle-aged and middle class in comparison with the population they represent.’ Similarly, Sono (1993:99) argues, ‘political parties, in any event, are interested in the person who gets the most votes, or gives the most money, not in the best or effective leader or member.’ Essentially, political parties are ‘dominated by elite groups with self-interests’ (DFID 2002). This leads to a situation whereby ‘in most of the African cases, “elite capture” of local power structures has been facilitated by the desire of ruling elites to create and sustain power bases in the countryside’ (Crook 2002:13). Clientelism and patronage in party politics is generally the order of the day. Although the poor people often participate in politics, they do so ‘on bases which objectively may have little to do with their interest in poverty reduction, or which may in fact be counterproductive to any goal of poverty reduction’ (Putzel 2002:1). For example, in most African countries:

the poor may be mobilised to political action (from attending a meeting, to voting, protesting, rioting or even engaging in violence) on the basis of the language they speak, the ethnic identity they feel or can be persuaded to identify with, the geographic region in which they live, the religion in which they have grown up or have been persuaded to join, or loyalty to their patrons (sometimes involving forms of reciprocity and other times implicit coercion) (Putzel 2002:1).

Meadowcroft (2001b:34) interestingly argues that ‘popular disenchantment with political parties has led them to be identified, with some justification, as an obstacle to achieving greater equity of representation in local government.’

By depending on the party machinery for political survival, ‘politicians may devote more time enjoying perks from holding official positions in the party’(Caillaud and Tirole 2002:1454). At another extreme, politicians may be spending more time

‘engaging in activities such as network building, cultivating their personal image, or attacking their rival, than to thinking thoroughly’ about more important issues such as ‘what [do] the voters aspire’? (Caillaud and Tirole 2002:1454). In the long run political parties ‘may indeed function as oligarchies, with party leaders consistently concerned to maximize their own autonomy’ by looking for ‘opportunities for effective non-partisan political action’ (Scarrow 1999:344). Similarly, there is a ‘long tradition of excoriating parties because they stifle independent political behaviour and instead strive to infect both voters and office-holders with unthinking party loyalty’ (Scarrow 1999:343). Sono (1993:99) concludes that ‘parties in other words are shift, opportunistic, manipulative, power-driven and are clearly despotic instruments; and are less altruistic than egoistic’.

Putzel (2002:5) mentions the problems of ‘feckless pluralism’ and ‘dominant power politics’. Feckless pluralism as prevalent in Latin America is a situation whereby ‘the formal rules of democracy reign under situations of relative freedom, but where political elites from all parties are considered corrupt.’ In this scenario, the government is rendered weak even at local level, as corrupt politicians are protected through party influence. The dominant power politics entails a scenario ‘where despite the formal rules of democratic competition, one organisation, group or individual remains dominant’. The problem in this case is that ‘little distinction is made between the state and ruling party’. All in all, party politics can curb local participation through corruption and lack of distinction between party and bureaucratic tasks.

Crook (2002:4) mentions that, ‘although there are examples of decentralised government in Africa enhancing participation, there is very little evidence that it has resulted in policies that are more responsive to the “poor” – or indeed, to citizens generally’. Probably this problem can be attributed to the stifling of local political participation by the party political machinery. The envisaged scenario is one whereby ‘participation in local institutions should help overcome the indifference, pessimism and passivity of the populace’ (Hope 2000:522). Referring to local government politics, Meadowcroft (2001a:31) mentions that councillors ‘are frequently subject to pressure from constituents who may expect their elected representatives to act according to their expressed wishes’. However, he adds that a ‘crisis of

representation' can break out 'when these views conflict with a decision taken by the party group'.

Erdmann (2004) makes an interesting observation which accurately sums up the characteristics of African political parties. The observed characteristics clearly show that political parties in Africa are unlikely to enhance citizen participation and representation. Erdmann (2004) argues that African political parties have

barely distinguishable programs, which in most cases bear no relation to their policies; weak bureaucratic organisations, which in many cases operate only on a temporary basis; informal relations (partly based on clientelism and patronage) predominate the party structures; strong personalism dominates formal internal structures; high degree of factionalism; lack of internal democracy; unreliable membership data...weak funding, which is not based on contributions of a broad membership but on the self-interested donations of rich individuals; and weak formal linkages to civil society (Erdmann, 2004: 65)

Notwithstanding all the above arguments against the party system, Scarrow (1999:343) raises a very critical point when he mentions that:

Whatever their overall assessments, participants in this long-running debate agree that party rules, party attitudes and party-sponsored legislation crucially influence how and how much ordinary citizens engage in potentially meaningful political activity (Scarrow 1999:343).

2.6 SUMMARY OF GOVERNANCE OUTCOMES EMANATING FROM CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN A LOCAL GOVERNMENT

From the discussion above the points outlined below can be deduced as possible outcomes of good citizen participation and representation. Some of these selected points will form part of the indicators [in the findings chapter] on the role of party politics in citizen participation and representation. These points have been selected on the basis of frequent references to them in much of the literature on local governance.

Table 3: Governance Outcomes Emanating from Good Participation and Representation

GOVERNANCE OUTCOMES EMANATING FROM GOOD PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more direct contact between voters and political representatives and office bearers; • it is much easier for the public to pinpoint responsibility and demand accountability from political representatives; • it secures justice in the application of democracy and creates a better opportunity for direct voter participation in the policy-making and decision-making processes through representation; • office bearers provide information to citizens; • enhanced acceptance of public decisions, programmes, projects, and services; • provision of the high-quality services that citizens value; • empowering of citizens through their enhanced participation in decision making, and development planning and management; • enhanced local governance; • more accurate and less suspect information about local conditions; • protection of individual and minority group rights and interests.

Sources: Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000:239); Brynard (1996a:44); and Hope (2000: 520)

2.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter has given the general direction of the study through a review of the relevant literature. Specifically, the chapter has explained in greater detail the concepts that are central to this study such as local governance, citizen participation, representation and party politics as well as their linkage. The chapter has also discussed the role of personality traits or leadership in representation and participation. Furthermore, the chapter has explained to what extent party politics is a relevant vehicle for local citizen participation and representation. Finally, the chapter has given a summary of good governance outcomes emanating from participation and representation.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3 INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this chapter is to give the conceptual direction and framework of the study. Firstly, the chapter discusses the conceptualisation and measurement of the key terms used in the study; this is followed by a description of the data collection methods and sample size. Finally, the chapter discusses data analysis.

3.1 CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

Burke (in Goodwin 1987:148) defines a political party as ‘a body of men [and women] united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed’. For the purposes of this study, party politics shall refer to activities undertaken by individuals or groups, whether ethical or unethical, in order to promote the interests of a particular political party and its leadership. In this study therefore, if individuals or groups pursue their interests without any reference (whether explicitly or implicitly) to any political party, such action shall be deemed to have no relevance to party politics.

The term participation is defined by Dulani (2003: 4) as an activity ‘where specified groups, sharing the same interests or living in a defined geographic area, actively pursue the identification of their needs and establish mechanisms to make their choice effective’. According to Theron (2005: 117), ‘the strong interpretation of participation equates participation with empowerment’. In this case, empowerment is associated with community or public ‘self-mobilisation’, ‘decentralised decision-making’, ‘participatory role of civil society in development’ and a ‘call for a bottom-up approach in which power is given to civil society’ (Theron 2005: 117). This study therefore refers to citizen participation as the creation or empowerment of local forums, community organizations, as well as joint planning efforts and activities involving the citizenry. The non-existence, decline or non-empowerment of such

activities implies a lack of citizen participation. In short, evidence of the desire (as well as the actions taken) for a community initiative and collective effort are a manifestation of community participation.

Closely related to participation, the notion of representation may be regarded as an effort by the elected or other public officials ‘to build more inclusive, deliberative and engaged relationships with the public’ (Orr & McAteer 2004:133). Consequently the study regards representation to have occurred if there is evidence of local consultation as well as engagement in decision-making and local policy formulation promoted by the elected local representatives (councillors) and local assembly officials. Accordingly, the concepts of representation and participation as used in this study are strongly linked to that of good governance (i.e. a bottom-up approach in decision-making, planning efforts as well as other community activities). Unless otherwise specified, the terms ‘local assembly’, ‘local government’, ‘local authority’ are used interchangeably.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND SAMPLE SIZE

As mentioned above, data (qualitative) were collected from the Mulanje, Zomba and Salima district local assemblies of Malawi. These district assemblies were selected because they are closer to where the researcher stays, and hence research costs were minimised. Additionally, these assemblies have elected local representatives (councillors) from different political parties, hence they provide an ideal environment for analysis of the role of party politics. Although the selected assemblies don’t include those in the northern part of the country, where the opposition parties mainly dominate assemblies, the selected districts are still representative of Malawi’s local assemblies. The main reason is that the number of assemblies in the north is negligible – there are only 6 districts in the north out of a total of 28 nationwide. Consequently, a focus on a few opposition-dominated areas may yield unreliable conclusions, unless it entailed a comparative study between the ruling-party and opposition-dominated areas. In this regard, the data from these three districts have not been analysed separately but aggregated. The study depends mainly on the qualitative approach and utilises the primary data but, where necessary, secondary data (quantitative) from previous research reports, government publications and other

periodicals have also been incorporated. A point worth noting is that all the selected areas of study are district local assemblies. Although the town, city and municipal assemblies have not been selected, the final findings of the study will still be representative of Malawian local assemblies, because the composition of the political and administrative wing of each assembly is approximately the same, irrespective of the fact that some are city (municipal) or district or town assemblies.

In each district six individual interviews with local officials were conducted, namely: two councillors (one from the opposition and one from the ruling party), local NGO officer who is an *ex-officio* member of the assembly, District Commissioner, Director of Planning and Development, and traditional chief. These individuals had been selected (using a purposive sampling method) on the assumption that they either influence (or are directly involved in) the implementation and formulation of local policies. The District Commissioner is highly influential at district level, because he or she is the Chief Executive Officer of the assembly. The Director of Planning and Development, apart from being a member of the local assembly, coordinates all development work in a district and hence comes into contact, almost on a daily basis, with the local politicians and other key stakeholders, including people at grassroots level. Councillors and chiefs act as representatives of communities in the local assembly on political and traditional matters. On the whole these individual interviews were essential in the collection of data that relate to the actual dynamics of local assembly politics and the extent to which political parties exert an influence on policy makers. Those interviewed were assured of confidentiality so as to encourage them to be more objective in their responses without fear of their bosses or colleagues.

Taking into consideration that ‘the wellspring of politics flows from the attitudes and behaviours of the *ordinary citizen*’ (Dalton 2000:912, emphasis added), the study also involved one focus group discussion (interview framework) with local communities in each district. The focus group participants were selected using purposive sampling as well in order to reflect divergence of interests. Members of the focus group discussion drawn from civic organisations and other local groups (one from each and preferably a leader) were purposively selected on the basis of their perceived frequent interaction with the local assembly and their elected local party leadership. Such a

selected group may be in a better position to evaluate appropriately the level of participation and representation being experienced through the local party machinery. The focus group discussion, as a method, assisted in the collection of data on citizen attitudes and perceptions regarding local representation and participation. In other words, the data from focus group discussions are ideal for capturing local communities' interpretation and experience of local party politics with respect to representation and participation. Each focus group was composed of ten members. The selected focus group discussion members were:

- 1 - The district market Chairperson;
- 2 - Chairperson of school committee of the nearest secondary or primary school;
- 3 - Chairperson of the local branch of the ruling party;
- 4 - Chairperson of the local branch of the official opposition party;
- 5 - Local Civic Education Officer from the National Initiative & Consultative Office;
- 6 - Officer from Women's Voice;
- 7 - Local agricultural officer / Local health worker;
- 8 - Local leader of Youth Alert organisation;
- 9 - Chairman of the local retired civil servants association;
- 10 - Chairperson of nearest Village Development Committee.

All in all, there were 18 individual interviews (six in each district) and three focus group discussions (one in each district). For samples of the interview guides used, see Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were analysed (manually) in order to ascertain whether party politics can be associated with the enhancement, regression or absence of the attributes of representation and participation as stipulated under 'conceptualization and measurement' above. The linkage between party politics and representation and participation was largely drawn from the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of local communities and individuals as expressed in focus group discussions and

individual interviews. Apart from focusing on the attributes (or indicators) of participation and representation in order to determine the role of party politics, the study also takes into consideration the attributes that emanate from good governance practices as summarised in Table 3 above. These additional indicators have been selected on the basis of the frequent references to them in much of the literature on local governance. Consequently, their manifestation at local level means that there is representation and participation and vice versa when there are absent. The study therefore determines to what extent party politics inhibits or enhances these attributes. However, Apthorpe (1997:145) warns against taking the recourse to indicators too far when analysing the impact of policies in Malawi because, according to him, some issues are ‘not amenable to representation in policy analysis through indicators’. To address this problem, the study also pays special attention to contextual causal analysis that is less reliant on indicators but captures the essential issues nevertheless. In other words, the study does not discard *relevant* issues that emerged during the study but which do not necessarily apply to the above criteria of analysis. On the whole, the paper is a highly dependent upon descriptive data analysis.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has given the conceptual direction and framework of the study. The chapter has discussed the conceptualisation and measurement of the key terms used in the study and this was followed by a discussion of the data collection methods and sample size. Finally, the chapter discussed the data analysis methods used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF PARTY POLITICS IN LOCAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

4 INTRODUCTION

The chapter gives and analyses the field findings from Mulanje, Zomba and Salima districts of Malawi, where the study was conducted. Before the presentation of the findings, however, the chapter begins with a brief overview of the socio-economic and political status of these three districts. The aim of this overview is to help contextualise the discussion and analysis of the field findings. The study findings focus on, among other things: community participation and political party demands; political party vs community representation; the role of party politics on the establishment and organisation of community organisations; leadership issues and rivalry between councillors and members of parliament; and finally the positive contribution of local party politics.

4.1 BACKGROUND TO SALIMA, ZOMBA AND MULANJE DISTRICTS: THEIR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STATUS

4.1.1 Salima District Assembly

The Salima district is located in the Central Region of the Republic of Malawi and is bordered by the Nkhota-Kota district to the north, Dowa district to the north-west, Lilongwe district to the west and Dedza district to the south. The district has a total land area of 2,196 square kilometres, which is 2.3% of the total land surface of Malawi (GoM 2002a:1). According to the last Population and Housing Census, Salima has a population of 248,214 (NSO 1998). There are two major tribes in Salima: Chewa and Yao. However, there are four minor tribes: Tonga, Tumbuka, Nyanja and Ngoni. Christianity and Islam are the two major religions in the district.

According to the 1998 census, 64% are Christians, 30% Moslems, 2% practice religions other than Christianity and Islam, while 4% have no specific religion (NSO 1998).

Although fishing is one of the activities in Salima, the economy of the district is largely agro-based. The main agricultural activities carried out in the district include crop production, livestock production and marketing of agricultural produce.

In the 1999 parliamentary and presidential elections, the Malawi Congress Party won two parliamentary seats, while the United Democratic Front had three. The 2004 election saw the Malawi Congress Party winning all five parliamentary seats. During the 2000 Local Government Elections, the United Democratic Front won 23 out of 25 Wards for the district. The table below shows the 2000 Local Government elections results for Salima District:

Table 4 : 2000 Local Government Election Results for Salima – Number of voters per party and contesting parties

Traditional Authority	UDF	MCP	Independent	WARD
Khombedza	2217	677	0	4
Kalonga	1209	1261	41	5
Msosa	1276	89	0	1
Mwanza	874	526	0	2
Kambalame	496	346	0	1
Ndindi	713	452	29	3
Kambwiri	669	261	0	2
Pemba	679	80	0	2
Maganga	1324	306	244	3
Kuluunda	1145	552	0	2

Source: GoM 2002a:10

The Salima District Assembly is composed of 25 elected councillors, 5 members of parliament, 10 traditional authorities and 5 members of interest groups representing women, the youth, religious communities, the disabled and the business community.

This assembly has five service committees: Finance, Health and Environment, Development and Works, Agriculture, and Education.

Salima has 10 traditional authorities and 117 village development committees (a representative body from a village or group of villages charged with the responsibility of facilitating planning and development at the grassroots level). The table below gives the actual distribution of these village development committees (VDCs):

Table 5: No. of villages and VDCs by Traditional Authority in Salima

Traditional Authority	No. of Villages	Number of VDCs
Maganga	62	10
Kalonga	195	21
Pemba	86	9
Ndindi	61	10
Khombedza	193	21
Kuluunda	31	3
Kambwiri	76	6
Kambalame	28	10
Mwanza	153	19
Msosa	46	8
Total	931	117

Source: GoM 2002a:7

4.1.2 Zomba District Assembly

The total land area of the Zomba district is 2580 sq km, representing 3% of the total land area of Malawi. The district has a total population of 540,428 (NSO 1998). The main ethnic groups are Man'ganja or Nyanja, Yao and Lomwe. There are two dominant religions, Christianity (78%) and Islam (20%). Like most districts in Malawi, the economy of Zomba is agriculture-based. Maize is grown mainly as a food crop, while tobacco is cultivated as a cash crop. Zomba is the fourth largest town in Malawi and is also a university town, where the University of Malawi Central Administrative Offices are located. Zomba had been the capital of Malawi until the

capital was moved to Lilongwe in 1975. It was for a long time the administrative and political centre in the country.

Zomba has a dual local government system comprising of municipal and district assemblies (this study is based on the district assemblies) established under the Local Government Act of 1998. The municipal assembly is composed of councillors, each representing one of the 14 wards under its jurisdiction and two nominated councillors representing special interest groups. The district assembly, on the other hand, is composed of 26 councillors, each representing a ward. During the 2000 local government elections all the wards were won by the ruling UDF party. In the 1999 and 2004 parliamentary elections, all the constituency seats were also won by the ruling UDF. However, two UDF members of parliament and two councillors later defected to the NDA. There are currently 6 traditional authorities and 2 sub-traditional authorities in the district. The traditional authorities are Kuntumanji, Mwambo, Mkumbira, Malemia, Chikowi and Mlumbe, while the sub-traditional authorities are Mbiza and Nkagula. There are 48 group village headmen and 1541 village headmen.

Table 6: Number of Villages and Village Development Committees by TA/STA

Traditional Authority (TA/STA)	Number of Villages	Number of Village Development Committees
Kuntumanji	143	8
Mwambo	366	8
Mkumbira	23	2
Chikowi	188	7
Mbiza	250	7
Mlumbe	446	11
Malemia	125	5
Total	1,541	48

Source: GoM 2000.

4.1.3 Mulanje District Assembly

Mulanje District is on the eastern side of Malawi and shares borders with Mozambique to the East, Thyolo to the South West, Chiradzulu to the North West, Zomba to the North and Phalombe to the North East. The population of the district is 428, 322, according to 1998 census. The total area of the district is 2,056 sq km. Most people earn their living from agriculture in the district. Mulanje is well known for the production of tea. There are several tea estates in the district, which employ about 2% of the population (GoM 2002b). The white British settlers own most of these estates and land conflicts have been a common occurrence in Mulanje. The major tribes are Mang'anja, Lomwe and Yao. About 89% of the population is Christian.

Administratively, the district has six traditional authorities: Chikumbu, Mabuka, Ndema, Juma, Mkanda and Mthiramanja. In total the district has 84 village development committees that incorporate 513 villages. The district assembly has 24 councillors and in the local government elections of 2000 all the seats were won by the ruling UDF. However, in 2004, about a quarter of these members defected to the NDA. At parliamentary level the district has nine constituencies. Out of these nine constituencies, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won three seats, UDF four and two went to the independent candidates. As the distribution of parliamentary seats shows, Mulanje has been a politically volatile area for some time, as is evident from frequent incidents of violence between the ruling party and the opposition (especially just before and after the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections).

4.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND POLITICAL PARTY DEMANDS

Theron (2005: 117) argues that 'the strong interpretation of participation equates participation with empowerment'. As indicated, empowerment is associated with community or public 'self-mobilisation', 'decentralised decision-making', 'participatory role of civil society in development' and a 'call for a bottom-up approach in which power is given to civil society' (Theron 2005: 117). The study finds that community participation, hence empowerment, is being inhibited by local political party demands.

Except for members of parliament and councillors, all the respondents emphasize that elected officials rarely consult the people when making their decision. One officer in Mulanje actually said that in some areas, people take their MP as their ‘god’. To them, any problem they face can be solved by the MP – hence the common expression ‘*musadandaule, tapanga kale ripoti kwa a MP*’ [Don’t worry, we have already reported it to the MP]. They further argue that close to election time, prospective candidates from different political parties tend to compete with one another in proclaiming that all the constituents should look up to them for any development work. Consequently, the communities assume that by voting for their favourite candidate, they simultaneously hand over to this particular candidate every responsibility for development activities. The District Commissioner in Salima specifically mentioned that:

It is actually the politicians [councillors and members of parliament] who have destroyed community participation. During campaign period, they promise that they will do everything related to development and even go as far as undertaking some projects from their own personal or party resources. When the elections are over, it is difficult to go back to the people and ask them to contribute or participate in development activities. The people usually respond by saying that ‘*kodi tinakusankhirani chani?*’ [Why did we vote for you?]

There are several development projects at local level, such as the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), which requires that for any project to be approved by the district assembly, it must show evidence of being initiated by the community concerned. The procedure is that the community has to apply formally for a specific project of their interest (usually after debating over it) and then fill in some application forms, which are then sent to the district assembly through their elected officials. But what happens in reality is different. According to the Director of Planning and Development at Salima, the councillors end up filling the forms without the knowledge of the community concerned. The Director of Planning and Development added that:

When we are reviewing applications, it is at times necessary for us to verify from the concerned community. We are sometimes surprised to learn that the concerned community members are not aware of the proposed projects applied by their councillors (*Individual Interview, Director of Planning & Development, Salima 4/04/05*)

One councillor in Zomba defended non-consultation with communities by arguing that, due to constant political party rivalries, it is sometimes not proper to go through this exercise. He went on to say that opponents from other political parties can ensure that the community should propose projects which are unlikely to be successful or get approval so as to frustrate the efforts of the councillor. Furthermore, councillors are afraid of asking the community about development projects, because the response from the people is likely to be ‘just do what you promised us during the campaign.’ It was also noted during interviews with councillors that they were more comfortable discussing development projects with their own political party officials (district governors of their political party) rather than with the communities themselves.

Case Study 1: Potential of political party interference in duties of development officers and community participation

The MP, who belongs to the ruling party, had promised a lot of things during the campaign period such as boreholes, construction of schools and dispensaries in her constituency. After winning the parliamentary seat, she wanted to prove to the people that she can deliver what she had promised. Consequently, she approached a World Vision International (WVI) development officer and ‘directed’ that a certain number of schools and boreholes be constructed in a particular area. According to the WVI development officer, this MP felt that since NGOs claim that they are in ‘partnership with government’, they have to demonstrate this by obeying what representatives of the ruling party say. Taking into consideration that WVI believes in community participation and initiative, the MP was asked whether what she was asking for had gone through wider community discussion and approval. Her reply was that ‘there is no need for me to ask them. Since I live with the people, I already know what they need and after all I am their MP’.

Interview with WVI development Officer, Mulanje

4.3 POLITICAL PARTY VS. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

According to the notion of representation as explained by Heywood and Goodwin (2002) above, the delegation and resemblance models of representation seem to be the most appropriate in political settings as opposed to the mandate and trusteeship models of representation. The argument is that delegation and resemblance models of representation to a larger extent carry the views of the people who are being represented. However, the study finds that half the councillors interviewed mention that the party they represent is very important, because they were placed in office through that political party. Those who felt that party representation is important explained that their political party gives them human and financial resources during the campaign period, so that it is unlikely for them to lose during elections. Those who felt that representing their community was more important than a political party argued that people do not necessarily vote for a political party but for the person. The political party is only there to assist them. One councillor in Zomba even said that ‘we know that in some districts, independent councillors were elected without any political party support; this entails that it is the community that matters most’.

The same councillors were asked the question that ‘assuming the community made demands that were contrary from those of your party, which ones would you choose; the party or community view?’ Interestingly, all councillors had difficulty in answering this question. The usual response was *‘pamenepa nde povuta kwambiri chifukwa mbali zonse ndizofunika’* [this is a difficult question because both are important]. It is noteworthy that this response came even from those councillors who had earlier on said that representing the people was more important the political party. This suggests that their earlier view in which the importance of people’s representation was expressed as a priority is not necessarily true.

During the focus group discussion in Salima, participants expressed the view that the appropriate way of representation is to ensure that the elected officials consult the people who elected them into office before deciding on any action. In order to support this assertion, one participant actually said that ‘there is no reason why we should have elected officials. If they use their personal judgement as currently is the case,

then it defeats the whole purpose of decentralisation and representative democracy espoused by the government.’

It also transpired during the focus group discussion in Mulanje that some councillors do not live in the area of their jurisdiction. One participant raised concerns over this by commenting that:

Kodi iwo angalimbe bwanji mtima kunena kuti akuyimirira ife pamene amakhala kutali ndikuchita mabizinesi awo? Chilipamtima pawo ndi kudyetsa azikazi ndi ana awo [How can they genuinely say that they represent us if they are living far away pursuing their own personal business? They are only interested in feeding their wives and children].

Two councillors (in Salima and Mulanje) who do not live in their wards responded by saying that the problem is that they do not necessarily get enough pay. According to them, being a councillor is equivalent to doing volunteer work. In order to survive they naturally have to pursue their own private business. This is also the reason why some councillors end up living in areas close to their business premises rather than the ward they represent.

Case Study 2: Perception of councillors on the significance of a political party in relation to representation

[The excerpt below is a response by the councillor on the following question: *What difference would it have made on your ‘representative’ role if you were operating as an independent councillor with no political party connections?*]

Being an independent councillor could have been very difficult on my part because it entails taking enormous responsibilities alone. In my case, if people don’t manage to see me, they usually go to my other local party leaders such as the branch chairman. The party structure acts like a representative of the people. After all, they voted for my party of which I am *just its servant*.

Individual Interview: Councillor Zomba

The study also finds that councillors rarely conduct meetings, because people take an opportunity during such meetings to make ‘unreasonable’ demands, especially those from rival political parties. One councillor in Zomba actually mentioned that ‘the more frequent the meetings, the more demands you receive and the greater the likelihood of not fulfilling them’, thus giving members of the rival party a better chance to win in the next election. On average, councillors reported holding one meeting every four months. A certain chief in Salima mentioned that he took over the responsibilities of the councillor, because this councillor was ‘useless’ as he rarely held any meetings in his ward. The chief further stated that, although officially this particular councillor is still representing the people, in practice the people report to the chief on all matters which need to be brought to the attention of the district assembly. ‘*Tsopano pamenepa councillor weni weni ndiye uti?*’ [So who do you think is the real councillor?], queried the chief.

The lack of meetings initiated by the councillor due to fear of rival political party members raising ‘unreasonable’ demands implies that the representative function is being undermined. The extent of this problem is further depicted in the table below, derived from interviews with councillors, which indicates whether the councillors had ever done any of the activities/duties listed and how often:

Table 7: Frequency of conducting community duties by the councillors

Activity	Ever done it?	How often?		
		Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Facilitating the provision of materials and staff by the council for projects	Yes		1	5
Attending meetings of Village Action Groups and District Development Committees to contribute towards solving problems	Yes		6	
Appraising the council on the state of services to and the welfare of community	Yes	6		

Explaining local authority policies to the community	Yes			6
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Note: The figures above represent the number of councillors (total 6) who gave that particular response.

The responses above show that councillors shun those activities that directly link them with the people at grassroots level. On the contrary, councillors are more comfortable in committee settings, where rival party members may not be as effective in opposing their views.

As explained above, Brynard (1996b:44-45) argues that, among other things, specific objectives for citizen participation are: (1) provide information to citizens; (2) get information from and about citizens; (3) improve public decisions, programmes, projects and services; (4) enhance acceptance of public decisions, programmes, projects and services; and (5) alter political power patterns and resources allocations. All these objectives stem from the first one, which is the provision of information to citizens. Table 7 above shows that councillors rarely explain local authority policies to the community, hence negatively affecting the rest of the citizen participation objectives. Taking into consideration that it is mainly due to the fear of rival political parties that councillors avoid these meetings, it is clear therefore that party politics contributes to the failure in fulfilling these prescribed citizen participation objectives.

4.4 THE ROLE OF PARTY POLITICS ON ESTABLISHMENT AND ORGANISATION OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

All the councillors mentioned that their main role was to ensure that development projects are initiated in their respective areas. This view was also shared by traditional chiefs, district commissioners and NGO officers. However, during the focus group discussion in Zomba one participant said that '*andale akusokoneza kwambiri munjira yokangana m'malo moti azitumikira anthu*' [politicians cause confusion, because they are busy quarrelling amongst themselves instead of serving the people].

The study finds that local political party leaders tend to regard the establishment of community organisations with suspicion. More specifically, in Mulanje it transpired that community organisations are perceived as potential tools for rival parties or threats to their popularity. What each political party desires is that every community-based organisation should be affiliated to it either directly or indirectly. If community organisations operate without any party affiliation, party leaders tend to regard such organisations as pseudo-parties and hence discourage the growth and development of the same. Probably the other fear is that such community organisations are likely to produce capable leaders who would in the long run take over the political positions held or contested by political parties.

4.5 LEADERSHIP ISSUES, RIVALRY BETWEEN COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON REPRESENTATION

On the aspect of local political leaders and their relationship with followers, participants in focus group discussions and personal interviews clearly indicated that local politicians are to a large extent delinked from their constituents. The reason is that local politicians only pay special attention to their constituents when the elections are approaching.

The district commissioner in Zomba mentioned that most councillors took up their position as a ‘stepping stone’ in order to eventually become members of parliament. Becoming a member of parliament is regarded as more prestigious and rewarding than being a councillor. In fact one focus group participant in Zomba referred to a councillor as the ‘*katundu boy*’ [porter] of the member of parliament. The members of parliament therefore regard the councillors as their political rivals. Consequently, projects that were supposed to be handled by the councillor are ‘hijacked’ by an MP and this leads to continuous rivalry between them at the expense of community representation.

This rivalry between councillors and MPs occurs, according to the Director of Planning and Development of Mulanje, not only across parties but even within each political party structure. This is also partly the reason why politicians would rather initiate and embark on a development project on their own, instead of subjecting it to

community participation, so that at the end of the day they should be personally applauded for its success. Accordingly, with respect to the attributes of leadership outcomes for councillors, as developed by Corina (in Cole 2002), instead of manifesting the ‘politico- administrator’ or ‘party politician’ type of attributes, the study finds that councillors largely exhibit the ‘ideologist’ and ‘partyist’ attributes, which are detrimental to the effective running of a local assembly.

During the 2004 parliamentary elections, several councillors resigned from their positions. Apart from other reasons given, the main motive for these resignations was that the councillors wanted to compete in the parliamentary elections.

As indicated in the model by Hambleton (2001:10) on elements that affect leadership, it is argued that at a local level, successful leadership heavily relies on personal characteristics and the relationship with followers. This study cannot determine with certainty the extent to which the local politicians lack or possess these personality characteristics. Similarly, taking into consideration that the views of constituents, expressed during individual interviews and focus group discussions, are extremely varied and without any clear agreement (apart from the problem of not addressing the question of causality), the study cannot necessarily determine the influence of leadership *personality traits* (as identified by Luthans in Shriberg *et al.* 2002:16) on political participation and representation. Consequently the study agrees with Milbrath and Goel (1977: 74) that ‘it is not easy to establish clear and reliable connections between personality and political behaviour’.

4.6 TREND IN THE LEVEL OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS AND THE ROLE OF PARTY POLITICS

Directors of Planning and Development were asked the question ‘Has participation increased or decreased over the past five years? To what extent can party politics be attributed to this scenario?’; their responses have been summarised in the table below according to districts:

Table 8: Trend in the level of community participation over the past five years and the role of party politics (according to the Directors of Planning and Development)

District	Level of participation	The role of party politics
Mulanje	Decreased	Parties tend to give handouts to the people, hence decreased interest in participation
Zomba	Decreased	Parties tend to give handouts to the people, hence decreased interest in participation
Salima	In some areas increased (especially close to the lakeshore)	Although political parties had negatively affected participation, some areas close to the lakeshore are more interested in participation, because NGOs have tried very hard to train them in community responsibilities.

The case studies below further explain the issues highlighted above with respect to the downward trend in the level of community participation over the last five years, which is attributed to party politics.

Case Studies 3: Decreased community participation over the years due to party politics

During the one-party system of government people were cooperative and we were not divided along political party lines. Whenever there was a need in a community, the local political party branch chairperson could mobilise the people and we used to work like one person. In those days, you wouldn't find a bushy road as is now the case. Such roads and paths could be cleared by the community immediately without necessarily filling application forms or demanding government help. Why is it that we are even failing to repair the broken doors of classrooms? Small issues like these, we report to the councillor or MP [and they don't bother coming]. Are they our gods?

I am not surprised, there are now too many parties and how can the people listen to too many masters? Even the ruling party is powerless in mobilising people.

Interview: Traditional Chief, Mulanje

Party politics has seriously contributed to the decline in genuine community participation. Political parties promise a lot of things for the people and don't encourage them to take up the initiative. The problem is that the moment a political party campaigns on a self-help platform or community initiative, it is likely to lose support, while those that promise free handouts are hailed as 'saviours'. Here in Mulanje almost 70% or more of the decisions made in assembly meetings are strongly biased towards political party interests and not necessarily the community.

Party politics discourages partnership because of inter- and intra-party rivalries. Political parties encourage handouts and they even go further and say that *Ife a chipani chino ndi udindo wathu kukupatsani zinthu osati ngati m'mene ena amachitira kumakupangitsani kugwirantchito kaye* [it is the responsibility of our party to ensure that we give you things for free and not as others do, who make you work first]

Interview with NGO Officer, Zomba

4.7 PEOPLE'S GENERAL PERCEPTION, IN RELATION TO GOOD GOVERNANCE, OF LOCAL ASSEMBLIES AND THEIR LOCAL POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

During focus group discussions participants were given statements to which they were supposed to give a response of agreement or disagreement. These statements are based on Table 2 above and are meant to assess the extent of people's general perception in relation to good governance and the political representation of their local assemblies. Before the statements were read to them, they were asked the question: 'Do the following attributes manifest in your local assembly?' After a lengthy debate, for each of the attributes in Table 2, the following is the outcome:

Table 9: People’s general perception, in relation to good governance, of local assemblies and their local political representatives
[derived from focus group discussions]

Good Governance Attribute for Local Assemblies	Zomba	Mulanje	Salima
More direct contact exists between voters and political representatives and office bearers	No	No	No
It is much easier for the public to pinpoint responsibility and demand accountability from political representatives	No	No	No
It secures justice in the application of democracy and creates a better opportunity for direct voter participation in the policy-making and decision-making processes, through representation	No	No	No
Office bearers provide information to citizens	Sometimes	Rarely	Rarely
Enhance acceptance of public decisions, programmes, projects and services	Yes	Yes	In some aspects
Provide the high-quality services that citizens value	No	No	No
Empower citizens through their enhanced participation in decision making, and development planning and management	Rarely	No	Rarely
Promotes better local governance	In some aspects	In some aspects	No
Obtain more accurate and less suspect information about local conditions	No	No	No
Protect individual and minority group rights and interests	Yes	Yes	Yes

The results above show that (with respect to good governance) people do not rate their assemblies nor their political representatives highly. Taking into consideration that representation and participation form the integral part of good governance, it can be said that local political representatives and assemblies have not met the expectations of the people as far as good governance is concerned.

Faguet (2003) argues, as already stated, that an effective local government should, among other things, have an open and transparent electoral system; a competitive party regime; a substantive focus on local issues and local people, and a flow of information on policy between local political parties and local constituents. The findings, however, show that to some extent the first two aspects are present. The study finds that there were some shortfalls in relation to a focus on local issues and local people as well as in the flow of information on policy between local political parties and local constituents.

Traditional chiefs were asked the questions below in order to ascertain the willingness of people and councils to participate as well as the closeness of councillors and the communities. Below are the chiefs' responses.

Table 10: Perception of the chiefs in relation to peoples' willingness to participate as well as level of closeness between councillors and the community they represent.

	Zomba	Mulanje	Salima
Do local people use consultation processes to complain (i.e. through councillors)?	No	Yes	No
Does the public have a strong desire to participate in the decision-making activities of your council? (Do you think the community is willing to participate?)	No	No	No
Do councils undertake participation schemes simply because the government requires them from the councillors?	Yes	No	Yes

The responses in Table 10 above clearly show that most assemblies and councillors are not closer to the people as envisaged, and participation occurs only in order to fulfil the government requirements.

Councillors were also asked the question: ‘What do you think are the most and least effective ways of participating in decision making within councils. Does party politics play any role in this?’ Councillors argued that there is no such a thing as ‘most and least effective ways of participation’ as far as decision making in district councils is concerned. According to them, every decision made in the council has to go through the proper channels that encourage participation of all members through verbal contributions.

Case Study 4: Threats of dismissal made by party leaders against local assembly secretariat

All the district commissioners agreed that party politics was a serious problem in the first three years after the 2000 local assembly elections. According to their observation, there was a lot of confusion in the exercise of duties by the administrative officers. The newly elected councillors at that time had high hopes and thought that they were going to control the secretariat through such means as hiring and firing. As the district commissioner for Salima put it: ‘What they did not know is that we are to a larger extent accountable to the central government and not to them.’ He also went on to explain that ‘They, on the other hand, felt that they should control and direct us on what is to be done instead of getting advice from us.’ Taking into consideration that the majority of councillors belonged to the ruling party, whenever there was a misunderstanding with the secretariat, the councillors usually threatened that they would directly complain to the minister or president. These threats had a negative impact on the performance of the secretariat, because as the Director of Planning and Development of Zomba said: ‘As a person with feelings, we were indeed intimidated and our duties were seriously affected.’

Overall, several studies have shown that party politics, on its own, can hamper effective citizen participation and representation (Erdmann 2004; Putzel 2002:5;

Crook 2002:13; Meadowcroft 2001b: 19; Sono 1993:99; Hollis 1994:12). This study confirms these findings. The study finds that inter- and intra-party competition enhances the politicisation of local authorities to such an extent that this destroys their true role as representatives of the community. Party politics tends to give priority to the needs and survival of the political parties at the expense of local needs. In other words, the emphasis is placed on elections. In this regard, the local political parties largely discourage participation in decision-making. Consequently, local needs are not easily identified and are neither associated with nor articulated through the party political machinery.

4.8 POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL PARTY POLITICS

Although there had been several negative impacts of party politics with respect to participation and representation as far as the local assemblies were concerned, there are several other noteworthy positive outcomes. However, these positive outcomes do not directly fall under the concepts of participation and representation, which are the focus of this study. These positive impacts of party politics on local communities, as derived from the individual interviews and observations, include the following.

Firstly, it was pointed out during interviews that party politics has encouraged people to know their political rights more than ever before. The chief in Zomba mentioned that ‘it is not easy for any political party to take people for granted, because the other rival parties are constantly checking to ensure that people’s rights are not infringed upon.’

Secondly, party politics has given an opportunity for many new leaders to emerge. During the one-party state period, political leadership was only attained through the MCP hierarchy, which mainly favoured the old loyal members. Currently many people, including the youth, have opportunities to engage in meaningful decision-making positions at local party level, as there are several legally registered parties in the locality.

Thirdly, party politics has helped promote debate at local level, which is healthy for democracy and good governance. This debate comes about because political party rivalry promotes diversity of ideas and views.

These observed positive outcomes of party politics can be areas of interest for further future research in order to give a more a comprehensive picture of the impact of party politics at local level.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter has first of all given the socio-economic status of the study areas: Salima, Zomba and Mulanje districts. This description of the socio-economic status was, among other things, followed by a presentation as well as discussion of study findings on community participation and political party demands; political party vs. community representation; the role of party politics on the establishment and organisation of community organisations; leadership issues and rivalry between councillors and members of parliament; and finally the positive contribution of local party politics.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the major issues discussed in this study and suggest some conclusions. Secondly, the chapter aims at proposing recommendations based on the field findings from the three districts. More importantly, based on the literature reviewed in this study as well as the discussion on the findings, the study proposes a model for effective political representation and participation.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown that local assemblies are not a new phenomenon in Malawi, but an attempt to improve on the earlier one established during the one party state. More importantly, the study has shown that during the one-party state, local assemblies were largely sidelined and hence rendered ineffective. Politically, the concepts of participation and representation, which are integral parts of good governance, were mainly associated with the then ruthless Malawi Congress Party (MCP). MCP was the only political party allowed to operate in the country. The study has further shown that the introduction of a multi-party system of government in 1994 was, among other things, mainly aimed at restoring the concept of good governance and thus promote participation and representation. The UDF-led government that came into power in 1994 felt that empowerment of local assemblies is critical to participation and representation. Consequently, the government ensured that the Local Government Act was passed in parliament. However, party politics seems to endanger the same principles which it is meant to promote participation and representation. It was therefore the aim of this study to investigate this phenomenon.

Taking into consideration that political parties are central in the running of local governments in Malawi as already envisaged in the Local Government Act, the study

gave a brief background to Malawian political parties. In the literature review the paper gave a brief overview and description of the main concepts such as local government, participation, party politics and representation. The aim was to provide the general framework for the study discussion and to elucidate the focal areas.

The study mainly utilised the qualitative tools of data collection and analysis, including individual interviews as well as focus group discussions. The local governments which were sampled for this study are those of the Salima, Zomba and Mulanje districts of Malawi.

The major findings of the study vis-à-vis the discussion in the literature review are summarised below.

1 - Based on models of representation propounded by Heywood and Goodwin (2002), the delegation and resemblance models seem to be the most effective as opposed to the mandate and trusteeship models of representation. The study findings show that Malawian local political representation has mainly the attributes of the mandate and trusteeship model of representation. Consequently, the constituents feel that they are not adequately represented in local assemblies. Party politics significantly affects the way politicians adopt these models of representation.

2 - Bearing in mind that the specific objectives of citizen participation should be, among other things, providing information to citizens, and getting information from and about citizens (Brynard, 1996b:44-45), the Malawi local assembly is unable to adequately achieve these objectives. The study has revealed that party politics discourages the people from setting up organisations or groupings that can adequately mobilise people for community-specific activities.

3 - Taking into consideration that there were no coherent responses relating to leadership personality traits, the study cannot necessarily determine the influence of leadership *personality traits* (as identified by Luthans in Shriberg *et al.* 2002:16) on political participation and representation. Consequently, the study agrees with Milbrath and Goel (1977: 74) that 'it is not easy to establish clear and reliable connections between personality and political behaviour'. Another study with

specifically designed tools of analysis might be in a better position to come up with reliable findings on this aspect. In relation to *councillor attributes of leadership outcomes* as developed by Corina (in Cole 2002), instead of manifesting the ‘politico-administrator’ or ‘party politician’ type of attributes, the study finds that councillors largely exhibit the ‘ideologist’ and ‘partyist’ attributes, which are detrimental to the effective running of a local assembly.

4 - In view of the fact that an effective local government should have, among other things, (1) an open and transparent electoral system; (2) a competitive party regime; (3) a substantive focus on local issues and local people; and (4) a flow of information on policy between local political parties and local constituents (Faguet: 2003), the study shows that two of these four requirements are fulfilled in the Malawi local assemblies. There is an open and transparent electoral system and a competitive party regime in local assemblies. However, the findings show that there are some shortfalls with respect to a focus on local issues and local people, as well as to the flow of information on policy between local political parties and local constituents. The study attributes these shortfalls mostly to the local party politics system. Local politicians and their parties usually have less to do with the needs and aspirations of their constituents. Local politicians and their parties only pay special attention to their constituents when the elections are approaching.

5 - The study findings reveal that there is a regressive trend in the level of community participation over the past five years, which is mainly attributed to party politics. During the one-party system of government people were more united, hence they could easily mobilise and achieve their community goals. With a multiparty system of government, people are not really united and few are interested in community activities, especially when local political parties make promises that they will deliver on their behalf.

6 - In general the people’s perception, with respect to good governance, of local assemblies and their local political representatives is that these haven’t been able to meet the people’s expectations. Taking into consideration that representation and participation form the integral part of good governance, it can also be said that local

political representatives and assemblies are not manifesting good governance practices.

On the whole, the study confirms findings from other studies which argue that party politics on its own is not a reliable vehicle for citizen participation and representation (Erdmann 2004; Putzel 2002:5; Crook 2002:13; Meadowcroft 2001b: 19; Sono 1993:99; Downs Hollis 1994:12). Apart from the reasons cited above, what mainly stood out in the findings is that due to inter- and intra-party rivalry, politicians tend to avoid direct linkage with the people, but use other subtle ways in order to win or stay in power. Some of the ways which parties and their leaders tend to employ are: discouragement of the establishment of local organisations, issuing handouts, promoting programmes that are unlikely to succeed in order to discredit the incumbent, deliberate politicisation of assembly decisions and threatening local assembly secretariats with politically engineered dismissals. Thus the study verifies the hypothesis which asserts that party politics has negatively affected citizen participation and representation in Malawi's local assemblies.

Despite these problems of party politics in local participation and representation, the study has shown that there are some positive aspects emanating from party politics, such as the promotion of new leadership and the enhancement of community awareness in relation to political rights. It should be pointed out, however, that these positive aspects do not necessarily out-weigh the problems associated with party politics as far as representation and participation are concerned.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The first part of this section gives the general recommendations. The second part introduces as well as explains the proposed model for effective local political participation and representation.

5.2.1 General Recommendations

Taking into consideration that the new local government structures in Malawi were established not more than five years ago after the 2000 local government elections, it

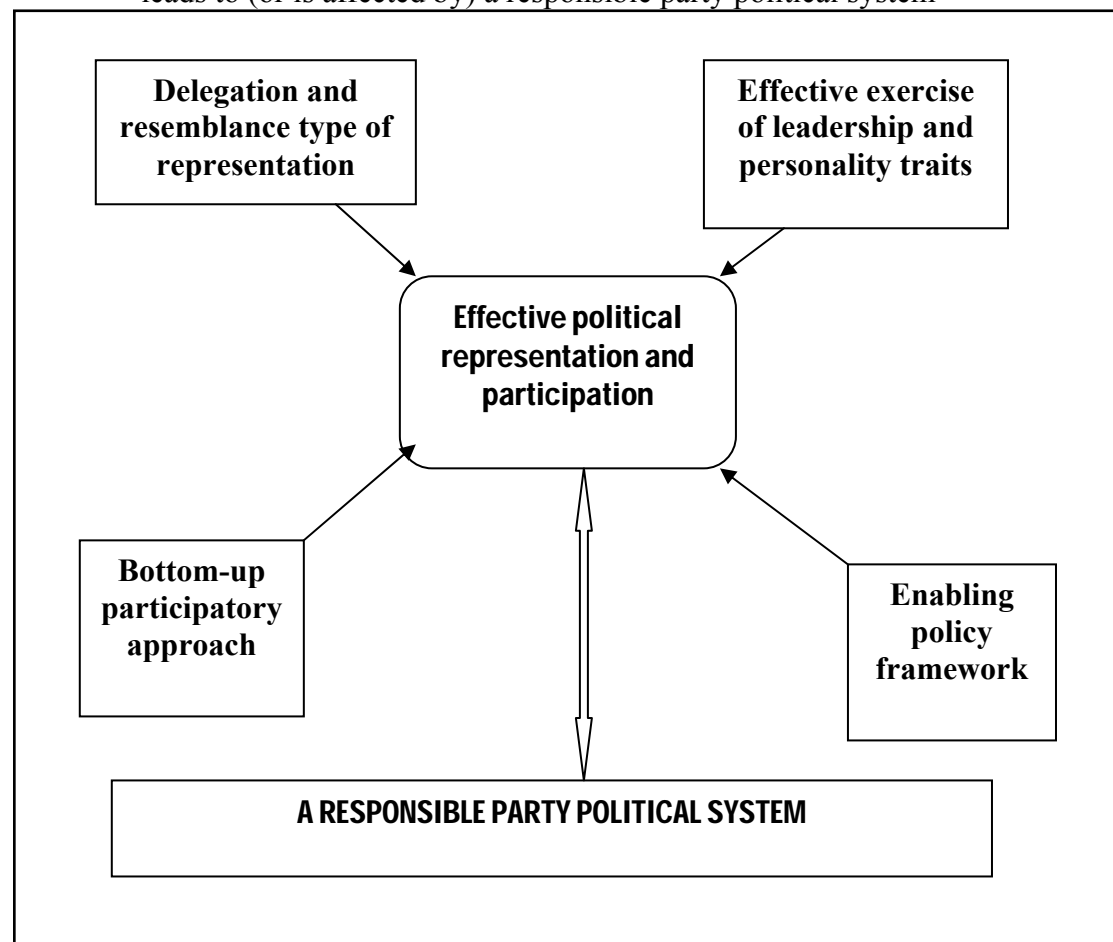
is understandable that some of these problems would arise. It was clear during this study that those interviewed expressed hope in the future of local governance in Malawi with respect to representation and participation. Probably these are just teething problems and, with the new leadership taking over in the near future, things will hopefully improve for the better. Specifically, this study recommends that:

- 1- Civic education, especially on the role and responsibilities of local community leaders should be strongly encouraged. This will in the long run enable people not to be easily taken in by 'hand-outs' and consequently encourage innovation and initiative as opposed to reliance on political leaders.
- 2- Local organisations created with the initiative from the grassroots level should be strongly promoted and enhanced with capacity-building interventions. These can be in the form of providing expert advice and skills development.
- 3- Local political leaders should be encouraged to meet with the people they represent and ensure that the views of the people are reflected in assembly meetings. This entails that the people's model of representation should be adopted (i.e. delegation and resemblance).
- 4- Political party leaders should be trained and encouraged to promote the idea of community self-mobilisation and initiative in order to bring about sustainable development in their constituencies or wards.
- 5- Taking into consideration that rivalry between members of parliament and councillors affects political representation and participation, the role of a councillor and that of a member of parliament should be spelt out clearly so as to minimise conflict and rivalry between these two.
- 6- Finally, it is essential that local political leaders must be aware of factors that lead to effective local participation and representation. Consequently, there is a need for the adoption and implementation of the principles associated with the proposed model for effective local political participation and representation, as explained below.

5.2.2 Proposed Model for Effective Local Political Participation and Representation

Drawing from this study's literature review, findings and discussion, the study proposes a new model for effective local political participation and representation. The model, which is illustrated below, has five factors that are regarded as contributing towards effective representation and participation. These five factors are: (1) an enabling policy framework; (2) delegation and resemblance type of representation; (3) bottom-up participatory approach; (4) effective exercise of leadership and personality traits; and (5) a responsible party political system. The model shows that the most important factor is a responsible party political system

Figure 4: Proposed model for effective political representation and participation that leads to (or is affected by) a responsible party political system



These factors are explained further below.

First, an *enabling policy framework* entails that the legal as well as policy framework should clearly support and effectively encourage the implementation of decentralised local institutions and activities. In Malawi the legal framework is relatively supportive of the implementation of decentralised local institutions and activities. However, it is essential to ensure that new policies or regulations do not distort the current policy framework.

Second, deliberate attempts should be made to ensure the adoption of the *delegation and resemblance type of representation*. In delegation a representative acts on the precise views of his/her constituents with little or no personal judgement or preferences, while in resemblance each representative is taken to be typical of a class of persons, whose interests he/she will automatically promote. These notions of representation (despite their shortfalls) are not only practical but curb discontent from the people, thus promoting representation and participation.

Third, the local politicians, their parties and the local government officers should seriously consider the idea of a *bottom-up, participatory approach*. This approach can be supported by institutional mechanisms that encourage community initiative, which may be incorporated into the decision-making process.

Third, local leaders should aspire to *effective exercise of leadership and personality traits*. This entails that there should be a healthy relationship between the constituents and the local political leaders. Furthermore, the local political leaders should possess and manifest the attributes of leadership outcomes as developed by Corina (in Cole 2002), namely those of the ‘politico-administrator’ or ‘party politician’.

Fourth, there should be a consistent pursuit of a culture of a *responsible party politics system*. In other words, special precautionary measures should be taken to ensure that excessive inter- and intra-party political rivalry is minimised. For example, campaign promises to the electorate at the expense of community participation should be avoided. Political parties should encourage the establishment of civil societies and promote their activities. All in all, the first four factors lead to effective political

representation and participation. This effective political representation and participation are further enhanced by (or affects) the development of a responsible party political system.

6.0 APPENDIX

Appendix 1

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE COUNCILLOR

- 1- What do you think are your main roles as a councillor?
- 2- Do you think that party politics constrains your activities as a local representative?
- 3- What difference would it have made on your 'representative' role if you were operating as an independent councillor with no political party connections?
- 4- Do you think you could still have been elected without party support?
- 5- Were you elected to use your judgement in decision making rather than be bound by the outcomes of public participation exercise?
- 6- Is your main interest whether to represent your electoral division or consider wider policy issues?
- 7- Assuming the community makes demands that are contrary to those of your party, which ones would you choose: the party or community view?
- 8- What do you think are the most and least effective ways of participating in decision making within councils. Does party politics play any role in this?
- 9- How often do you conduct or attend community meetings every week?
- 10- Have you ever done the following (if yes, how often?):
 - Facilitating the provision of materials and staff by the council for projects;
 - Attending meetings of Village Action Groups and District Development Committees to contribute towards solving problems;

- Appraising the council on the state of services to and the welfare of community;
- Explaining local authority policies to the community.

Appendix 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER /DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT / NGO OFFICER / TRADITIONAL CHIEF

1- Do you think elected officials should use their judgement in decision-making rather than be bound by the outcomes of public participation exercise?

2- Which do you think is the best way the elected local politicians should represent the community in their constituencies?

3- Has local party politics ever been a problem in discharging your duties?

4- To what extent does party politics influence participation in the community?

5- Do you fully cooperate with local party leaders?

- Do local people use consultation processes to complain (councillors)?
- Does the public have a strong desire to participate in the decision-making activities of your council? (Do you think the community is willing to participate?)
- Do councils undertake participation schemes simply because the government requires them from the councillors?

- Over the past five years, do you think the level of public participation in decision making has increased or decreased? To what extent can party politics be attributed to this scenario?

Appendix 3

GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1- Should councillors be elected to use their judgement in decision making rather than be bound by the outcomes of public participation exercises?

2- Does the local party political leader encourage the creation of local community organisations?

3- Does the local assembly encourage the creation of local community organisations?

4- What do you think is the relationship between the local assembly officials and local party political leaders?

5- Is representing community views to the council the most important activity?

6- Among the roles of the councillor, is party representation of greater relevance?

7- Does local public participation have any significant impact on final decision making?

8- Are local party leaders willing to support development activities initiated by their rivals?

9- Should councillors be elected to use their judgement in decision making rather than be bound by the outcomes of public participation exercises?

10- Do the following attributes manifest in your local assembly? (If no, why not?)

- more direct contact exists between voters and political representatives and office bearers;

- It is much easier for the public to pinpoint responsibility and demand accountability from political representatives;
- It secures justice in the application of democracy and creates a better opportunity for direct voter participation in the policy-making and decision-making processes, through representation;
- Office bearers provide information to citizens;
- Enhance acceptance of public decisions, programmes, projects, and services;
- Provide the high-quality services that citizens value;
- Empower citizens through their enhanced participation in decision making, and development planning and management;
- Promote better local governance;
- Obtain more accurate and less suspect information about local conditions;
- protect individual and minority group rights and interests.

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